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TRAVEL TALK

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FOREWORD

I FIND it a little difficult to write a foreword to this little book. The difficulty is not the book but the author of the book. How am I to deal with her and her writings? They do not require any commendation from me, and I would dislike to criticise over much.

It is easy to criticise any set of views in this complicated world that we live in. And Aruna Asafali often says and writes something that is liable to criticism. But that criticism, however justified, would be poor stuff, for it would deal with some superficial aspect of a living, vibrant and challenging personality, who has shaken up many a sleeping person and become in many ways a symbol of these changing times.

Symbols are often disturbing and challenges are disconcerting. And so Aruna is both a disturbing and disconcerting individual to many. She does not fit in easily into the usual pattern, and perhaps she deliberately avoids doing so. She feels that she has a mission and is anxious to live up to it. The real crusaders are always few in number and there is something of the crusader, to a cause to which she is passionately attached, about her.

A crusader produces varying reactions on different people. The very force of personality and will attracts, and charms, and compels attention. And yet many people, afraid of this very compulsion of a

personality or feeling uncomfortable because they are continually reminded of the crusade which might have the effect of upsetting their lives, do not like this impact. They prefer the normal routine of their lives.

Most of us go through that routine untouched and uninfluenced by external events or by the attraction of a great purpose. Some feel that attraction intellectually and try to work to that end, though without upsetting the even tenor of their lives. Yet others, few in number, feel in addition to the intellectual attraction a powerful emotional urge which drives them incessantly to action. That emotional urge comes usually not by the reading of books but by the impact of events.

During the last quarter of a century or more events have often moved fast in India bringing in their train shock and surprise, frustration and exultation. Many amongst us have been so affected by this shock of events that our lives and even our inner being have undergone a transformation.

That was the effect in 1919 and 1920 on a very large number of persons as a result of Gandhiji's leadership in the national movement. Ten years later another wave passed over the land sweeping thousands of men and women and influencing millions. Yet again, in the early forties India was convulsed and out of this convulsion new symbols arose, stern and unbending and with something of iron in their souls. Aruna Asafali was no new-comer on the

political scene But 1942 transformed her and made her different from what she had been She stood out as an extraordinarily courageous fighter for India's freedom and because she was a woman and daughter of India, she struck even more the imagination of the Indian people

Among the many strange things that have happened in India during this quarter of a century, perhaps the most notable is the emergence of Indian womanhood Large numbers of Indian women have played an important role in our struggle for freedom. Many of them have stood out by their ability, capacity for organisation and self-sacrifice for a cause Some of them can be ranked very high in any assembly of women all over the world This fact, more than any other, demonstrates the renaissance of the Indian people and the strong foundations on which we have built our movement for freedom

This little book mirrors this remarkable personality, not only in ideas but in the vigour of its style It is good writing but it is something much more than that, for it compels attention and forces people to think Any book that does all this is a worth-while book and the reader is the better for having read it, though he may feel a little uncomfortable in the process It matters little whether one agrees with its main thesis or not But it does matter whether our minds are static and closed or dynamic and receptive

For these reasons I commend this book and hope that there will be many to read it In the reading of

it they will have some glimpse of that passionate urge which moves India and which will ultimately take India far. What that new India is going to be, none of us can say. But whatever form or shape it may assume, it will consist of vital persons moving forward with dynamic urges. And it is well for a Nation when this is so.

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1. The Return

THE still shots of a film got re-activated. It had stopped long back on the ninth morning of August 1942 at 4 a.m. but those were shots of a story that was contained, set scenes of life in comfortable studios, homes, work-a-day centres.

Often^r than desirable, the camera caught drawing rooms and salons. Again, funnily, came pictures of squalid homes, women at their spinning wheels or arguing the cause of women. But on that ninth morning at about eight (or was it half past ?) a tear-gas bomb struck the projector, the reel lost mobility, the auditorium grew dark. Bewildered and grouping I walked out.

When the gas bomb stung me first, I grew a little afraid, but when I saw a white policeman tear into strips the National Flag, I grew bold again. When the streets rang with pistolshot sounds, I felt dazed. When I saw another woman inert and silent, I grew furious.

But then, am I talking of "the Return ?"

Why does the "walking out" fascinate or excite ? Why wander the dim memory—corridors lit only with the after-glow of conflagration, peopled by humanity in turmoil, littered with ghosts of sick destitutes ? This nostalgia for heroic hours, days, and weeks, has in it high tension morbidity. Usually trapeze walking is, they say, a tense affair, very wearying for the nerves, only, for those who would rather not drag and shuffle, it brings elation. For such, it is hard not to loiter about in those forty months when the old order became blurred, dissolved, and the new lay gripped in the excitement of

birth ordeals For those who have been through it, the thought of a Return seems fantastic

Returns are no easy journeys Is the end a beginning ? Was the beginning the end ?

Why must the clamouring of the curious be satisfied ? Why heed the call of the Social Man ? Why return when the evils you set forth to conquer, remain , when fellow travellers may not join in the return journey ? But hush ! The irrational must not dare to hold its own in the strong glare of the flood-lit stage.

You may tarry behind the scenes guiding and directing speech or action , you must not get lost in shifting stage-property and ringing the bell for the next act. Success or Failure—it is an end But lookers-on insist on your bowing and scraping so that they may applaud Hollow clapping and still more empty formalities you must face these (“for the Cause”) or else or else, you will acquire insanity—status !! And it is sanity that pays

These thoughts, are they too morbid ? Too charged with feeling, revealing unbalance and reluctance to “face robustly” a “new situation” ? If only the newness were new !

That was the first demand of journalists, of friends, of kith and kin on this return ! Also their second, their third and their fourth demands ! That which lies buried, one may not expose because it would mean exposing the wounds of a whole people.

Readjustment to the city-smug life of old appeared a betrayal, a vulgarization of values Living ‘legally,’ a violation of higher laws

All manner of inhibitions check one’s first footsteps from seclusion to group life. Efforts at clinging to the

purpose which motivated them, impulsions towards an uninhibited life of struggle are the main urges. The distractions of group life, the routines of genteel social living, the re-mooring to a class I thought (how immaturally) would emerge cleansed of its false trappings

they threaten to drag me back to the shell I walked out of. But the gods were kind. They whispered "Courage." And they waved their magic wand and re-revealed in the eager faces of the people as they massed around me, the faith I had clung to, these many months.

The light of affection, not the stare of the hero-worshipper, that is what restored my confidence. The jostling and pushing and almost snatching gestures—not the ordered pathway for a 'Leader's' footsteps as I walked amidst them—restored the bond I thought had snapped. The gods were even kinder.

The friendliness of the citizen-mass seemed cold and formal, when in the villages, rough and rustic hands after garlanding, snatched away the superfluous flowers and threw them back wild with glee. They rejoiced only in the defeat-of-the-police part of the story. The elders with tears in their voice rebuked me for refusing to remain garlanded during my talk—"this is a village, we want to see you just like that."

The village youths as they heard my story, rushed up with pledges promising work.

This was indeed an acceptance. I warmed up. They had broken through the barriers of my empty urbanity, my cultivated speech, my sophisticated home-spun. If they found it possible to respond to me so humanly, all was not lost. My faith in myself returned. I may yet be an instrument, a means for their ends? They had not disowned me though I returned empty handed.

They had not questioned my sanctions, to speak and work in their name Their seal of approval was not expressed in the set formal language of welcome Their desire to be kindly and to entertain, meant just a glass of skimmed milk, not an invitation to a ceremonial feeding, associated with notabilities of the days or the 'Heroes' of the hour The chill within vanished From a vague abstraction, the forty crores I had written and talked about, became a palpable reality The incentive for vigorously exploring their needs, their joys and sufferings, grew keen My sense of social responsibility grew sharp and the faltering will to live, faltered less Charged with the meaning that these people attached to "living", the superficiality of my class setting became unimportant With memories of their heroism to browse amidst, and ambitions linked with their future, life on the stage need not be stagey

These may be but the first reaction and counter reaction Who can say what shape thought and feeling will take when the journey grows longer and harder? I do not wish to know I seek no anticipated end The end and the beginning, let them change and inter-change—fluid, luminous

A sense of wholeness came back The umbilical cord was relinked, restored I had returned

2. Men who rode the Storm

WAITING for trains that run late is an irritating business And most so, when instead of 'arriving any moment now' (enquiry office news) the period lengthens into indefiniteness But when the train that one waits for is to unload warrior friends returning from the front, and instead of the advertised arrival time (imminent) it is not sighted for two months or more, patience is strained to cracking point.

Expecting the train of events that would restore to freedom captive and outlaw co-workers, I have been living perpetually on wayside stations and in travelling kit (literally and figuratively) from Jan 26 to April 5 Bureaucracy's obduracy relented only when it could unbend without 'losing face' Autonomy-freedom gave popular governments the freedom to set at liberty prisoners and absconders of the Quit India fight According to one view "under a government which imprisons any one unjustly, the true place for a just man is prison", according to another—a vogue of '42 the "tyrannicides" of society ought never to fall into the tyrant's hands We have since 1857 incarnated two passions The love of country and the love of freedom But a tender humanity, a religion that is humanism has been grafted on to these by Gandhiji Every fighter in the cause has attempted to better himself as an instrument under the influence of his purificatory drives The urges to act as one thinks, to elevate thought to the super-personal level and thereby link action with other than self-regarding ends, has been his message from struggle to struggle led by Gandhiji. Indian manhood

under his direction has withstood every challenge to it as well as it could. It surpassed expectations only once in recent history—and that was in August '42 and subsequently.

The men who rode the storm of '42 are all of them gone with the receding wave. Everywhere the unknown men in great upheavals are never long remembered, the known few become symbols—for good or evil. Whether it is the devils that triumph or the angels, the few live, and the rest sink into race memory. But the few are recapitulated personifications. Through them recapitulation becomes easy. In them the history of the struggle lives, its anguish and achievements colour these human projections. Such residual elements again pose a question. Will they be like heavy sediment, that, stir as you might, tends to settle below, or will they soar into the upper layers, restless and aerial?

My travel scheme had a purpose. It was meant to be a cover page. While waiting for the return of those whose co-operative efforts were needed to make another attempt to achieve the unfinished tasks, I meant not merely to mark time, I wanted to gain personal knowledge of men and women, their thoughts and capacities. But a change in the political temperature in the last ten days altered my plans. Restrictions on the liberties of some 'free' men were removed. Jail doors parted and other 'free men' walked out. The pressure of the people had worked where autocracy refused benevolent amnesty. Gandhiji triumphed in cases where it meant to remain unmoved.

"A P"

Achyut Patwardhan's arrival in Bombay meant a great deal to those who had worked with him there.

Tunnel life breeds loyalties that are cemented with hazardous experiences. Those who shared with him a common focus of danger, hard living, uncertainty, anonymity, problems, bent towards purposeful striving, exhibited unrestrained joy at sight of him. The masses were even more excited when he addressed them. But minds, used to trick-work, failed to adjust themselves as easily. Is this political-leader-looking man the man who created the revolution in Maharashtra, framed its directives for cadres everywhere, drove a coach and four across his own cultivated past? Time's tests vary, mutability is part of the secret process of growth.

Status quo lives cannot return for those who rode the storm—or is this a romantic expectation—a refusal to live on the plane of normality?

But in themselves the releases of politicals mean little. It is only when they become 'issues' that they are significant.

J P & R M L

Jaya Prakash Narayan and Ram Manohar Lohia's friends were reconciled to their indefinite detention. Gandhiji pursued the matter in his own determined way. The salt law and political prisoners were minor issues for those engaged in resolving larger ones. Constantly aware of the relationship of the small to the big, he must have insisted vehemently and that was why J P and R.M.L. came out of Agra Jail on the 11th April.

Crowds have never shown much respect for order anywhere and when the mood of elation is high it becomes unrestrained. The discipline of emotions is a tall order for even the elect. They received J P the legend-hero who scaled prison walls to help fighters for freedom in

November '42 with tumultuous affection Since his arrest J.P. was known to have suffered much. Today he has a sober look, a calm manner, traits that never deserted him but appear more pronounced today There is much that is expected of him After all the *ancien* regime, if it goes at all, will not mean utopia ushered

Those whose lives are nailed under poverty, ignorance and squalor will have to be transformed What agencies will achieve this metamorphosis—that is a question that optimists have to face even though its answer shatters their smugness But if incurable unbelievers in change-of-heart-freedom are proved right and British vested interests, have to be fought once again Jayaprakash and his companions Ram Manohar and Achyut will be expected to lay out before those who are pledged and enlisted soldiers, a plan and an organisation. Mass activation requires mass influence but that is not enough A dynamic drive alone can make the inertia-ridden normal man plunge into recreative effort, heighten his social responsibility and create out of chaos, relationships based on absence of social injustice. Jayaprakash and his team are expected to be the spearheads of these forces In the storm centres where they worked they showed themselves not unworthy men Fearlessness and the abandon born of it are great qualities rare in a slave people, much more so in its middle classes Statesman leaders of India have brought her to a point when their work is almost done Fightermen now must come forward and fulfil the new challenge

THINKING TIME ?

I have not talked of work because 'work' has been suspended these ten days Somehow life never means

relaxation because even these workless days kept one breathlessly busy. If only the 'negotiations' were carried on in an hermetically sealed chamber and the world informed that its decisions would be announced on a fixed date, whatever the result, much waste of national energy could have been avoided. As it is, New Delhi is exercising a paralysing influence. All talk of immediate work lacks reality. Perhaps this is the time, then to say with the sage walrus, "the time has come to think of many things" —Has it come?

3. Mould for Action

ENVIRONMENT and Ecology shape minds, they invest one with material for fighting life's battles, or for accepting life as it comes. A sharp will is required to build a framework that enhances one's powers of self expression. With changing times and altering urges it must triumph over the pull of tradition. On taking rigid measures to control the time-space, man-society parallelogram we live in, depends our ability to extract from every hour the hard grain of achievement. Regimentation when it helps to organise thought and generate action is a good thing. Over-simplified denunciations of controls overlook the fact that volatility and distractability must be checked to preserve life energy at its maximum potency.

There was a time when with other Anglophiles of my class I used to scoff at Gandhiji's Ashram life. It was for some (it still is) the fashion to be irreverent and therefore modern about such institutions. Inmates of Sabar-

mati and Wardha were subjected to well-meaning ridicule. In our shortsightedness some of us could not distinguish between a cult-colony and work colony. Men and women devoted to a "master's" well being may at times develop a mental squint. "Bhangiwadi" may look very different from the actual living space peopled by the scavengers themselves. The village Congress session may result in a town atmosphere invading rural areas rather than the latter influencing a Congress-nagar. But the effort they represent, this moving closer to the poorer in body and mind and material belonging rather than running away from them is a healthy and useful departure. Gandhiji the pioneer has broken fresh ground here as in almost every walk of life and made us tiresomely nostalgic for oasis living. I saw oasis living purposely.

There comes a time in life when desire turns away from material to non-material objects. At such a moment in an individual's history the dust and din of a house-holder's existence turn it into a desert. Oasis seeking becomes a passion, Gandhiji long long ago turned his face away from the ordinary occupations and standards of his social status. His experiment has been outstandingly successful—his amazing output of work bears sufficient testimony.

While waiting for co-workers to assemble here, I thought I would observe life in Bhangiwadi, study its spirit and see if this pattern could be synthesised to meet demands of a different nature and for a different generation.

The Birla Houses in India have acquired undeserved notoriety. Millionaire hosts cannot become supporters of a cause that has in it the germ of a social revolution.

that will sooner or later eliminate them. And yet, in India's anti-Imperialist queue, stray millionaires form its tail-end. Unnecessary publicity, however, is given to these. Gandhiji has a use for every man in this queue but sometimes the shrewd make use of the prestige his association brings. And much misunderstanding exists about the role of capital owners in the national struggle. Their pittance for assisting it is magnified disproportionately to their advantage, but to Gandhiji's and Congress' disadvantage. The simple Indian is a snob somewhere. Gandhiji's Birla House stay was not repugnant to him as such. It was only after '42 that he saw the wall between Gandhiji and his hosts, and was aghast to find the latter so callous and indifferent to him when he and crisis faced each other. Therefore Gandhiji's decision to give up living with his rich admirers, made anti-capitalist, anti-careerist embittered men and women, happy.

Bhangiwadi has all the facilities of a General's camp. Two telephones, reception rooms, a secretariat, a suite for guests, a field kitchen and eating shed, thatched roofs and tents instead of brick and mortar structures. How devastatingly representative of our mud hut civilization and categorically different from the massive stone-built Imperial Secretariat and Viceregal Palace of Imperial rulers. But to a foreigner this camp is just a phoney HQ of a revolutionary organization about to take up responsibility for the state.

Early in the morning at 4 a.m. under a sky still brooding in the dark the camp dwellers pray, and later a batch of young men come along and drill themselves and later on women (and men) sit spinning yarn. No soap box harangues, no sober political study circles either.

No militant figures all abustle, nor sentries changing guard but boy-scouts keep watch and order, and yet the foreigners are told that this is the main centre for radiating radical political and social work. Some foreigners, pressmen mostly, try to be sympathetic while others can barely cover their antipathy. Those who always have an eye on the foreign angle are apologetic or sheepish when an American or English critic talks of the anti-diluvian conditions in 'GAANDI'S' camps. Some of us have grown un-slavish enough to be indifferent to their views.

Gandhiji's days are packed with work, and but for the routine he has evolved he could not have borne the physical strain. Beginning and ending his day with prayer brings him strength. Interspersing his work hours with brief spells of rest and regular meal times he covers enough work in his 24 hours that a normal man would take 3 times that time. It is amazing how he has to look into the smallest detail, ailing patients, frustrated men and women, the distressed in mind all have a claim in his work day as much as his political colleagues or British Cabinet men. Gandhiji's colony is a training centre without a syllabus in black and white. And yet Gandhiji alone has raised a Corps of trained cadres. Organising autonomous institutions to work out his constructive programme these men lead lives devoted to its fulfilment. But they now need revitalization. A change in their courses of instruction, more innovations in their equipment, a little more imagination in their human approach and this body of men could scarcely be equalled. Even in '42 they rose to meet the onrush of repression fearlessly and undogmatically. What if they realized later that in doing so they had transgressed the

laws of Satyagraha? The time for action did not find them wanting. They were perhaps afraid of his rebukes. They need not have been. Gandhiji values independence of thought and action if they spring from genuine conviction. In the *Harjan* of 21st inst writing about J. P. & R. M. L. he says —

‘You know Shri Jaya Prakash Narayan and Dr Lohia. Both of them are daring men of action and scholars. They could easily have become rich. But they choose the way of renunciation and service. To break the chains of their country’s slavery was their one passion. Naturally the alien Government regarded them as dangerous to its existence and put them into prison. We, however, have different scales to weigh merit and we regard them as Patriots who have sacrificed their all for the love of the country which has given them birth. That they would be found wanting in the scales of non-violence is irrelevant today. What is relevant is that independence of India is today common ground between the British and ourselves.’

A critical understanding of Gandhiji brings one nearer to the spirit of his message. If a new synthesis is not worked out the blind alley we have reached will eventually become a bottleneck. Progress in terms of masses of humanity will be no easy target. Fixity, ruthless self-control, a big grip on the shifting strands of our political ideals, are demands that we must make on ourselves. It is audacious to think of remoulding man’s life, it is equally preposterous to attempt it without making a mould for oneself.

4. Seven Weeks Seven Cities

ON the way to Wardha, I was conscious of nervousness. Gandhiji's chosen city would perhaps look askance at one whose protestant temperament refused submission on grounds of faith only. Congressmen and the people of Wardha, however proved that protestantism is no sin. They accepted it as a token of health. The drive to Sevagram again made me thoughtful. I had read of the charm of the rural scene amidst which Gandhiji dwelt. The charm lay, I found, in the knowledge that a great man stayed there.

GANDHIJI

Evening prayers had begun, hymnal chants, the still erect figure of Gandhiji, a small group of men and women attentive, silent, stars lit the sky overhead, spring breezes stirred the trees here and there. The yellow light of kerosene lamps lit him. He sat in meditation, the man who had moved two generations of Indian men and women, taught them to think as free individuals and not act as slaves.

Gandhiji's first words to me and my replies have, I am told, been reported by the maudlin, in a sentimental a manner as could be thought of.

My reporting to him was no new matter. He has himself been gracious enough to acknowledge that I had taken every possible opportunity of acquainting him with what I felt he should know since his release. That which I had to say I said, again not to justify myself but to inform, to seek through him to communicate with those for whom he is the best bridge. There is much

of what he spoke and I replied that must remain undivulged. The glare of publicity serves no purpose, when that which is publicised is meant for private consumption only. An understanding is hard to establish, but somehow he, in spite of our expressed differences, drew me into his inner-but-one circle—of sons and daughters. In fragmentary talks conducted in the course of early morning and late evening walks, it is not possible to import that continuity and fluidity essential for decisive purposes. Since time did not permit this—an assignment in Poona summoning me—I concluded my visit to Sevagram.

In between my appointments at Sevagram and public meetings (which I need not describe, as they are getting more than their share of recognition in the Press) the meetings of Congress workers was a stimulating exercise in thinking *ex-tempore* and aloud. Questions needing answers apparently, have not for long been addressed by the "ordinary" workers to any of the oracle Leaders. Talking to them, the need for dispelling confusion and telling Congressmen definitely what were priority tasks began to appear to me as urgent. They had grasped essentials incompletely, and felt inadequate organizationally. Three years and more of illegal existence had disintegrated the machinery. A strong personality to guide, a clear programme of preparation and rebuilding were urgently required. More material for reporting to those who matter, I said to myself as I left them.

On the railway platform, *en route* to Bombay, a significant feature was the presence of Rashtra Seva Dal volunteers, and large numbers of women. Unmindful of the cold late hours, they sat

A pathetic faith in myths brings these countless unknowns together. Giving them mere slogan-formulas for vigilance-preparation and courage-building seemed ironic. All these qualities lay incipient in their eyes, voices and limbs, lean and athletic.

BOMBAY

Bombay and my work there, gave me a new routine. In the Kamgar Maidan meetings, the suburban dwellers' meetings, and the more publicised Chowpatty and Shivaji Park meetings, I met men and women who were no strangers to me. In this city the White men's bureaucracy does not inflict its presence on you. At every turn here amongst men of all classes and ranks, you find some who have lost fear and acquired courage. Bombay is vividly associated in my mind with 1942 and many peril-filled days. Its labour population though swayed by Communist propaganda has shown signs of regaining its lost national sense. The average Congressman and student there, is keenly alive to his social and political responsibilities. The citizen has so grown accustomed to police terror there, that he has lost all fear of authority.

As my scheduled stay drew to its end, the Ratings of the Navy episode shook the city for three days as nothing had done for years. It was a spontaneous flare up. Imperial arrogance acted like tinder and vague resentment blazed into a flame of instantaneous revolt. On all that happened there, I will not dwell, for I must hasten to catch the mail.

POONA

In Poona, the city of the great figures in Maharashtra history, I saw many familiar young faces—ex-secretaries and messenger servicemen of the growing organisation of Indian Nationhood. They were the men who had made communication possible when all communication was denied to us

Gandhiji and I talked briefly in Poona. He and I are still engaged in exploration that may lead to mutual discoveries. That I have acquired the privilege to gain his ear and report on behalf of those whom I represent is an advantage. I may not have been able to conform, but I have been frank and have tried sincerely to understand. Conformity and identity based on mis-reading are not conducive to development.

"We understand you more than any other set of Congressmen", I claimed. We were talking about Arthur Koestler's estimate of him and our hostile reaction to it. When people express surprise that Gandhiji should not agree with my politics, I am surprised. We claim to interpret the theory of action on its merits. He will subject them to ethical evaluations that are his sole standards. How is identity possible? Why be surprised when it is not possible? If his frank criticism of our views takes away from us support, we must try to do without such support. Sanctions gained on false assumptions never add strength to those who lean on them. If we can prove our worth as soldiers in the service of freedom, he will not disown us. Mere verbiage, sophistry, and shirking work will discredit us in his and our peoples' estimation.

The well-tries, soundly organised R S D workers men and women of its H Q impressively uniformed were smartly drawn up at a rally Looking at them, I was convinced finally of the need for initiating a youth movement in every village, in every Province

The Congressmen I met in Poona, were somewhat confused by my trend of reasoning My crude clarifications seemed to satisfy the rank and file Not the select

CALCUTTA

In a brief 48-hours' stay in Calcutta after a month's absence, I found the Railway workers keyed up in anticipation of a strike Their disillusionment on post-war retrenchment and gloomy forecasts of wage-cut have made them bitter against yesterday's advocates of a People's War They openly confess that had they known better, 1942 would not have found them apathetic

ASSAM AND BACK

Assam is within twenty-four hours reach of Calcutta and culturally also quite near But to many in India, it is remoter than the North West and less known than Cape Comorin I wonder why My own affinities with it are remarkably strong Its people have a rugged quality of soul Its men and women have hearts without smallness, unsophisticated, courageous and ill-suited to intrigue

August 1942 found them in the forefront of the great struggle On the way to Assam, the small towns are seething with Bengalees, impatient of *status quo*

The famine of Bengal killed millions Those deaths still haunt them They know the reality of Imperial

rule They seek a formula for freedom "If you can give us one 'Leader' who will choose to work in rural Bengal and not treat Calcutta as Bengal, we shall show you how strong we can be Nehru is All-India, Sarat Babu is All-India", they complain

The workers in the A & B Railway are well-prepared Their Association has taken every necessary step for the strike ballot and the strike

In Assam again known faces so welcome when spotted in a motley assembly closed around one From Gauhati to Nowgong one sped past fields and distant hills Men and women, peasants and tea-garden labourers, they all knew that the Congress *ray* had begun But the knowledge had not enthused them much "Jail delivery was not all we thought we fought for" Patiently they await the unfolding of Congress's Quit India Plan

In the meetings in Jorhat and Gauhati, I related my encounter with Muslim Leaguers who came to stone and belabour me while I was on my way to Assam I told them of my experiment with Ahimsa in facing them and inviting their blows and their refusal to stone or strike me They shouted "Pakistan" and demanded that I join their League "The British can give you Pakistan If you can fight them, go ahead," I said 'While I am fighting for Hindustan, if you join me and fight Britain for your Pakistan, may be, you will realise that your enemy is not the Hindu from whom you wish to separate Nazimuddin's League Ministry could not save Muslim Bengalees from dying of starvation—it was a Ministry doing what the British wanted it to"

They were silenced Simple impassioned Indians Muslims or Hindus follow frank talk and respect fearlessness I narrated this story because I did not want

them to be afraid of the Muslim League's opposition. The Congress Premier and Ministers must be told by the Assam Congressmen that not appeasement of the League, but a mass amelioration drive is called for

Back in Calcutta after a day of platform meetings, I should have felt fatigued. But the sight of thousands acts as a tonic. Up at the Howrah Maidan massed with labour men, I found sympathetic and sensitive listeners

The fight for more cloth and better housing and shorter working hours means to them the real fight for freedom. They seek our aid. Congressmen must not fail them

Back again in Delhi. Curfew. The scene here is all of a pattern. Section 144 rule, i.e. no meetings. Workers and citizens in prison, or injured in hospitals

Imperial Delhi bosses wanted the poor citizen to "celebrate" victory. The Imperialists have as yet not grasped the fact that they can force Indians into prisons, but they cannot order them to make merry. The will not to tolerate foreign authority is hardening—that is a lesson that the English rulers are reluctant to learn

And that is the end of my story covering seven weeks and seven cities

5. Fraternities: Social Groupings

Action born of purely spontaneous impulse is rare. Individuals no less than masses of people seek to subordinate action to thought. They make them definite and purposeful and measure the results according to a set standard. Impulsive action is usually decried because it leads to ineffectiveness. Yet in the larger movements governing history, spontaneity has lit fires consuming and devastating. It is nevertheless true that man owes his peculiar status on earth today to acquiring the art of organisation. The family, the clan, the tribe were forerunners of organised institutions like Governments and of class and such like groupings.

Social organisation as a process by which individuals are associated in a group has become intensely significant today. As it becomes progressively more acute, the place of individuals as social forces decreases, and this is no unhealthy development. The collective will of a group rather than the arbitrary rule of individuals should control community life. It minimises the element of error due to narrow individual predilections in social and historic development. Also, the larger body need not depend on its more assertive units. Real freedom of thought and action is insured, power is collectivised and its misuse lessened.

But hitherto, organisation has been the monopoly of the crafty and the greedy. Nature's inequalities have reflected themselves in our human organisation. The strong have overpowered the weak, and in the struggle of *masses vs men, men have won*. History is full of the infinite trials of the oppressed and history is not a matter

of thousands of centuries Here and now the mills of tyranny are busy grinding away, mutilating the rights of man

The saving grace lies some where near the edge of the social soul The idealist urge, the desire to dream and to work so that the vision becomes reality, permeates a corner of its edge Into this corner men and women born with that urge flock

This fraternity of idealists in every age and every land fights its battles for the weak—losing battles, but worthwhile ones Their quest is simple To bring into being a community where hunger and fear are banished, where happiness and grief can be exalted, unprovoked by either the menace of need or the fear of fear

How does one achieve this purpose? This is a question all of us who live for a purpose ask one another The answer comes ORGANISE What and whom do we organise? "In the works of the revolutionaries the struggle is glorified and the man who struggles Do we like the struggle for its own sake? No, the struggle is a political means, as politics is a means, too Without the struggle, without politics we are the iron on which the hammer is beating But we must become the hammer that shapes the iron" An apt quotation from a European revolutionary book

That sums up our case rather well If we want to become the hammer that shapes the iron we must work out the processes involved in converting iron into hammers For this we need a voluntary association of men and women employed in the 'hammer factory' Human beings who will emerge from it spiritually, mentally and physically fit to deal death blows to an unjust order That I dare say is what we mean when through flaming

proclamations or quiet discussions we point out the relevance of organisation to our prescribed ends.

At Neral, a village on the road to Poona, the Bombay Rashtra Seva Dal instructors have been leading a camp life for three weeks now. Thirty-five young men training for a life of struggle, simplicity and social revolution. Everyone of them was eagerness personified. Bronzed skins, wiry physiques, these youths of Maharashtra were preparing through action. Our elaborate manifestoes urging workers to organize, to work, was being put into real action. Their routine was no different to that of Boy Scouts Camps. But the meaning behind their syllabus was rich with feeling and ennobled by high thought. Through games, physical training and study classes they were welding hardness into their youthful lives. The hard knob of the hammer. As they saluted the National flag, or marched in formation, or practised the art of the lathi and the art of handling dummy rifles, I noticed a glow on their faces. It was the glow of self-confidence. The sharp drill 'orders' were incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Brevity must be the soul of efficiency,—I thought. In the short time I spent in the camp I realised the value of organised life. Watching a military parade of troops on the march one becomes resentful. The state organises its men into armies for purposes of either retaining power or resisting the equally matched. These boys were organising their talents voluntarily to become the unaided man's army, to oppose an oppressor State, to destroy money-power. They gained their lessons from the spinning wheel and the dummy rifle, from the Gita as much as from Socialist literature. Paradoxical but comprehensive.

The Seva Dal songs echoed through the valley ; a challenge from the unconquered faith of youth in moving mountains, to grow free and strong, to destroy and build In this camp I witnessed the evolution of the new Indian and before my day is done, I would like to see this process established in every corner of the country A new type for a new order Or else the latter may not last long, even if achieved early

The tales of '42 came to one as from geographical units, when secret working was essential I had read in our underground bulletins of Vir Kotwal's acts of bravery I had heard of his death on the 2nd of January 1943 in Sidhagad, shot through the head and chest. I have not known, however, that with him had died a loyal young lieutenant, Hira Patil At Neral, Goma Patil (the father) and his wife came all the way from their village, 5 miles away Hira was their only son, 25 years of age Goma Patil was with Kotwal when he was surrounded by the police In the exchange of gunfire old Goma escaped, young Hira was fatally wounded ! In Goma Patil's face there is no sorrow or bitterness He is just bland, apparently calm But I could not take my eyes off the emaciated face of Hira's mother. Petrified tears, lightless unseeing eyes, grim and silent, grief past the stage when its wounds hurt—a relic of a bygone rebellion Such derelicts are common and the inevitable residue of a mass struggle. That is the complacent politician's view Ours is different. These sufferers' faces shall stare us in the night, reminding us that the price they paid is a debt—a national obligation—they expect reparations, in terms other than cash

In the village of Neral common women had gathered in large numbers The women of Maharashtra are col-

lectively the most unrestrained. Hard working women are an asset to any community. But not if they become drudges. Women have in them rich possibilities. Unutilised they lock up specialised talent. An organisation to be complete must have in its composition women in active service.

In the railway carriage a woman of the working classes travelling with me became communicative. Her knowledge of newspaper personalities was remarkable. She asked me why 'we' fight for 'them'. A difficult question, particularly when posed by such as she was. I wondered why, although my reply satisfied her query. She talked of the 'Mahars' in her colony in Worli and sneered at their criminal acts. They tried to kill Mahatma Gandhi. How utterly foolish of them! The Gods protect their own, they send them to earth to do good. We have driven out these Mahars—by boycotting them socially! "Will the Girm Union succeed in raising our wages? Can't the Congress Unions take up our cases?" She was intelligent and self-possessed. From her talk with her other friends I got a glimpse into the human problems behind abstract ones.

I cannot yet reconcile myself to the post-revolution state of our minds. Why do workers insist on mass gatherings? Nana Patil and his band of workers are household gods (not names) in the working class population of Bombay. Why was it necessary to insist that they make a political debut after their splendid guerilla existence of 3 years and more? "Awakening the workers' patriotic emotions." "Presenting to his gaze human idols", can't we change the technique? However, 2 lacs with Gandhi Caps on, are an impressive sight. A uniformed mass, it was actually a rally of Bombay

workers, the biggest ever held for a hitherto unknown band of national workers. When their day arrives even they will perhaps not be able to do away with these demonstrations. Display of strength after all may develop strength. It remains wasted when the show becomes an end in itself. We must guard against such emptiness.

And back again we come to our big need—organisation. If every mazdoor and every kisan is to fight for his freedom, he needs to be taught how to fight. For imparting that teaching you need teachers. The teachers must know what to teach and their medium must not be just books. Who will provide these minimum requirements for training workers? Either an individual or an organisation. The former cannot import into his or her effort that efficiency which a group can. Hence the need for an organisation. Collective striving brings to an organisation, group strength. But the group should not become a coterie, it must be elastic, non-dogmatic in its politics free from prejudices, unorthodox. But in its work it must have all the pointedness of a closed compact team! Paradox again—efficient turn-over should be our main priority. We are out to oppose a mechanised organisation. A social order based on an army of occupation and an Army of Bureaucrats will require a planned assault, and for planning as for execution we need to ORGANISE.

The Seva Dal youths carried on their work in total unconcern over the fate of the British Congress negotiations. Everywhere except in the fields and factories the question of questions is “has the ship of freedom got torpedoed in the high seas?”

6. Approach to Personalities

PERSONALITIES whose activities lend colour and direction to an age are rare. But this shortage in numbers is made good by the influence they radiate. Even in times remote humanity kept count of men renowned for their prowess, learning or godliness. They were sources of inspiration to little men in strange, far apart lands. News of kings, priests and saints travelled far and wide. Those however who enjoyed world influence were never many.

Every country and every age has brought into relief men around whom have grown schools of thought and action. And a complex of causes operates to produce these personalities. The wind and tide of circumstance becomes for them a crucible. Biological and environmental factors become the fuel beneath it, while the spiritual instincts of past generations light the fire. Struggling against inherited tendencies, overcoming social handicaps, men who become personalities now come to the selection of values. And this selection grows into a personal philosophy. To the extent to which they succeed in refusing to remain prisoners of their past, they attract the attention of those who fail. The spiritual content however, of the values that stamp their personal philosophies must appeal to the masses' instinctive need for spiritual leadership, otherwise they fail to react. On the spontaneous reaction of the masses to a body of ideas depends the latter's dynamic powers.

Little men build up great men because they feel weak and the great are great because they are either wise, or strong, or clever. When the great are all three together they transcend to Godhood.

Therefore, those who control the organisation-life and thought-life of a people are men of intelligence, firmness of purpose and insight. Further, imagination and integrity usually cement their characteristics. To guide a large following of men and women so that the trust reposed by them may not be betrayed, the leaders of men have to be eternally on the watch. *The purpose once fixed, the methods employed to achieve it must subserve the end.* If perfection of means becomes an end, let this be the goal. But if the goal is total freedom from social, political and economic ills, then in the way of its attainment no other interventions should be tolerated.

Watching Gandhiji at the congregational prayers is a valuable experience. Is his struggle twin-fronted? The perfection of the individual receives so much attention that all available energy and material is absorbed in the attempt. Change from within or conditioning through external stimuli is another unresolved poser. At his prayers an attempt is made to combine both the methods. Gandhiji's insistence on the gathering's hymn-clapping in unison is not appreciated by cynics. Some see in it a futile adaptation of a western method, others a deliberate attempt at side tracking spiritual soporifics. Either of these interpretations may be over simplifications.

As one who knows he is law unto our medieval masses, he may not ignore their psychological urges. And yet as one who has essentially set his heart and soul on changing both Indian manhood and its slave environment, he feels the compulsion for a compromise. Tested pragmatically, his method has been amazingly successful, so far. But certain signs do indicate that the method has outlived its utility. Squeezed of its efficacy, it is about to fall into decay. Philosopher-kings and priest-kings

have had their day. It is only in our country that Gandhiji has revived the concept in the 20th century. True, in the modern ideal polity, the concept is re-appearing in new form. That is largely because the western man has overreached himself in his quest for material satisfaction. To check this pedestrian philosophy of life the West is turning to the easterners' search for soul perfection as an antidote. While this should be a warning to such of us as seek to imitate the Anglo-Saxons slavishly, we cannot afford to be blind to the limitations of the theory and practice of Gandhiji's philosophy.

Daily at his feet through prayers and hymns slave hearts pour out exuberantly their devotion. In advising that they should dedicate all action to God he appears to me to be preaching to the converted. We Indian slaves are so completely absorbed in seeking spiritual solace out of our physical miseries, that Gandhiji's stressing its significance only adds to our ingrained fatalism—so fatal to our growth into freemen. There is of course always a political-social note in his daily discourses after the prayers. These talks again end up, of late, on a note of defeat, that is of submission to our inherent weaknesses and lack of faith in God. His suggestion that only a mastery over the lower self, as purer faith in a deity and greater strength of spirit will break the red ring of ill will and treachery thrown around us by a powerful foreign power acts as a depressant. Even if this be partly true, is it not very much more necessary that some external pressure through organised action be applied to the slack-willed underfed, undeveloped body-mind of our millions stirring them into action for self-growth rather than lulling them into an introvert's

despair-mood ? Is that not what our masses need ? In the prayer gatherings men and women come to worship the master rather than follow the leader. Let us have worship in our hearts, but let us demand that we march to our goal and not pray our way to it.

At long last the British have betrayed the trust Gandhiji had in their good intentions. The saint in him is too strong not to admit an error of judgment. He has confessed that his faith has been replaced by 'misgivings' and 'fear'. He is surrounded by darkness and therefore unable to lead and he ascribes his own misgivings to his lack of faith in God ! This is the man-of-religion's escape. Smaller individuals see in his confession nothing but naive goodness exploited by an astute opponent. We who cannot forget the inhumanities perpetrated by the British never had any doubts as to their intentions. Manoeuvring for a change of position is no change of heart. Our leaders have been double-crossed. Reactionary allies have helped the British Labour Party to get away with plausible excuses again. They will plead that internecine quarrel stopped them from fulfilling their noble mission. Lao-Tsean humour will help them to prove their case. In his words the British will proclaim

*The good ones I declare good
The bad ones I also declare good
That is the goodness of Virtue
The honest ones I believe
The liars I also believe
That is the faith of Virtue*

Finally after one whole year's effort at freedom struggle we are where we were ! One farce has ended. And now a one act play begins. The audience—a larger

one this time—will now witness the Indians' incapacity to think concretely and to act unitedly. In theory we are told the British have quitted. In practice they remain just so long as we can't decide amongst ourselves the manner in which we shall loot the treasure house that is India!

In the meantime hungry men and women have started dying. Ill-paid workers have taken to inconvenient ways of getting better wages. Petty tyrants and puppet rulers have dared to check the freedom movements of Congress leaders and Congress revolutionaries. The passion for freedom seeks an outlet everywhere. In Madura men died because Jawaharlal was insulted in Kashmir, a Congress Minister's regime notwithstanding! But unless we have the courage to organise their emotional and physical qualities, men will go on dying pointlessly. They will be the subject of pity, not praise. Congressmen everywhere will have to think hard whether they will continue to fight for freedom or discuss what structural shape it *should have when it descends on us*.

7. Hundred Men meet Future Horizon

WHY do we usually meet in a group or a mass? To convey an idea to discuss and plan action. Be it religious or political, ceremonial or social there is always a purpose. And the purpose is evaluated. Is it good or is it bad? It all depends on one's scale of values. Over-simplified preferences are easier to follow. Likes and dislikes are born far back in one's ancestral heritage. They grow

out of the tyranny of instincts into a rational framework. With the growth of personality they reach new levels. When the mind's soil has attained saturation point after it has sucked in every drop of nourishment, values tend to get crystallised, finality is attained. Maturity and wisdom are installed where all was raw and wayward, a balanced being is born. Life acquires an integrated meaning. The purpose grows clearer and living not a matter of marking time but a positive growth.

Political thought and action even in their present day connotation do not usually attract the bulk of a people. Very largely people do not permit intelligent and coherent thinking in their mental sweep. The human bulk is influenced into reactions, both positive and negative. Its own initiative awaits a pressure. It is always the few who act as levers. It is the many who act in response. In the human order everywhere there have been periods of intense mass action followed by long stretches of apparent inactivity. Every age has registered its own particular social, and political urges. In every age individuals have singly or in groups shaped the direction of these urges. The role of an individual or a large number of individuals depends on what values they stress, their decisions can be regarding self or other. If the latter such men become motivating factors, kinetic agents. Their consciousness of ends for the larger group drives them into a fold. They seek out individuals who share their thought and hold similar objectives. This is what leads to the birth of religious, political and social movements. And out of them are born men who direct the flow of group thought and

action. They are either leaders, or workers, men out to meet themselves in a process.

When the urge to remove oppressions from the social order becomes volcanic in intensity, it is said to be a revolutionary period. Social discontent is not easily observable. Men and women strive in silence, die unattended, grow callous with pain, without knowing or even caring to know why they suffer. It is not possible for them to realize what or who oppresses them. That the money power of the privileged is at the root of all their misery, they cannot see until the Social Revolutionary's pointing finger spots the evil.

The task of those who impose on themselves the duty of re-ordering society is usually an uphill effort. Man resists change even if it is from hell to a promised heaven. Natural inertia is his enemy. No 1. The fear of the unknown comes next. Abandon and daring are rarely integrated with a socially useful end. More often than not they develop anti-social tendencies in the victims of our lopsided civilisation. So that such as would work for a new heaven and a new earth must not only be prepared to oppose entrenched evil but root out the down and out's incapacity to resist the powerful. The social revolutionary must be well equipped himself if he is to fight battles for the weak against the strong.

He cannot be weak and unprepared. *Mental and physical training for a warrior life are absolutely essential.* A clear vision of the goal is indispensable and the means of waging war available at every step.

All the hundred men or nearly so who met in Bombay last week were men of action. A great upheaval had found them thrown on the same heap of circumstance. The storm had abated, their struggles had become a

matter of history, its results not calculable at all. But the evil they had set out to destroy remained palpable, visible, almost irremovable.

These men from all over were again in the cleft of the interregnum. They knew that their job was not over. Would this be that inevitable lull after the storm? If so, where should they begin? Or was this the end? No, they would go on in their search as far as their span of life permitted. The search would be for the next opportunity and new strength. Through group action (or Party) they knew they could complete their incompleted work. And they assembled to ask each other and their leaders where and how to begin afresh.

This band of nationalist patriots were keenly conscious men. They were experienced in the art of political struggles of the Congress conception. Some knew methods evolved by the people themselves. They were that group in the Congress who though deeply attached to its militant nationalism found its official programmes inadequate, its organisation insufficiently elastic; its present offices closed to them. This was a team with incentives of a different intensity and velocity. It could not work with fellow Congressmen who accepted the elder leaders' policies unquestioningly. They found the Congress lead healthy but its leaders less so. They sought a new direction, fresh clarification and more than anything an organisation and a plan.

The fact that the Congress was nearly on the point of accepting Britain's *bona fides* regarding quitting upset their calculations considerably. The machinery which Britain wanted to set in motion to drive itself out of its Indian Empire made good faith difficult. Its

concessions to communal demands had virtually ended the hopes of those who wished to strike at the root of our internal discords. Communal frontiers would lock them into communal territories. From joint electorates to a Hindu-Muslim-Sikh India was a big drop. A dictated plan that must either be worked or thrown out by a majority of those whose interest it suited was a strange version of a freedom plan. A Constituent body not representative of more than one man in a million was to work out Free India constitution. And the Britisher who prized Democracy so dearly that he fought two big wars for its sake did not feel outraged at such an infringement of the people's rights. The Socialist Britisher is the half brother of Churchill on Indian issues. Even more incongruous was the fact that the British would supervise these freedom formulating arrangements. An interim Government would rule in the meantime, with England's Viceregent and her army and her bureaucrats ever watchful, and ready to sidetrack events in the name of minority justice if not law and order. The Constituent Assembly had no constituent authority and yet the elder leaders had agreed to accept it as a correct machinery for effecting transfer of power. However, since the only alternative lay in agreeing with the leaders or opposing them, the worker-fighters decided to await the Congress Working Committee's final decision. The Congress would not be consulted at all !

While asking for an organisation and plan for work the workers disclosed many interesting problems. Should the old group in the Congress retain their former organic structure ? Or should the post '42 arrange-

ments stand ? A co-ordination was suggested and accepted

About the work and its character all appeared agreed on the need for intensified effort among the people. The villager and the worker in organised industry were still far from alert for action *en masse*. Whatever their potentialities they were not initiated. Training in democratic forms along co-operative lines alone could enable the men of our soil to be their own saviours. However well meaning and ideally identified with them one might become their sorrows were theirs. The town-leader educated and reared in an atmosphere far removed from their own could only be their specialist-physician. His intensity may never burn fiercely. His keenness may be blunted. Nevertheless for awakening the dormant soul of the man to whom freedom will mean the end of poverty and the beginning of new opportunities, the town bred leader is doing good work. Whether for working towards a Social revolution he will be equally zealous is a matter of grave doubt. However, the hundred men who gathered in Bombay, went away reassured. Acquiring an assurance that their wilderness existence was over and that the foundations for organised work had been laid, heartened them.

The picture of the next struggle was blurred. Is the nationalist fight against Imperialism over ? Will the next assault be a class assault ? Will the Congress become a Government Party ? Breaking up a meeting with unsolved questions haunting one, is not good. But it is high realism today, when uncertainty is the only certainty.

8. The Casual Chain

THE Chain of Casualty is winding and long. It binds together a heterogeneous mass of men and events. It makes galley slaves of free men, transforms weakness into strength, brings prosperity to the few and disaster to many. Never does this process strike one so insistently as during a war. Watching the interactions of casual factors and their resultants is a fascinating mental exercise. It is also interesting. Who has not known the elusive satisfaction when the original idea of a whole chain of unconnected ideas is reached at last? The arbitrary tyranny of association-formations in the mind is as ruthless in its social workings. Man seems so completely at the mercy of a determinist ordering. History then is no more than a plaything of this inexorable mechanism. Why be a little cog in its intricate soulless game? This is cynicism, the wise will proclaim. And cynicism kills the incentive for action and actionists would die if they found action meaningless. Either this world in all its full-bloodedness or oblivion-dreaming, with all its call to the slothful in one—if only some compromise were possible, self-poise and self-direction would be better achieved.

THE AZAD HIND FAUJ

Ruminations like this will have to be explained. It might startle some if I confess that they were caused by a close up view of officers of the Azad Hind Fauj. These are men from every corner of our land, men of good physique and genial temperament who but for an accident of history would have returned as India's libera-

tors Equally easily, they could have been officers of the Army of occupation, untouched by the last crisis in human affairs, awaiting fresh instructions from their Imperial lords, carrying them out for the sake of a living

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHANGE

As it happens, they were fortunate Given a chance to prove that Indians, slaves though they are, can overcome fear and temptations offered by a wily friend, they broke away from the British yoke and did not bend before the Japanese They stood up for their nation and under its biggest man of daring, Subhas Chandra Bose, planned and fought its freedom In terms of actual achievement their record could not be one of success Fate or that awesome casual chain had willed the other way

The psychological change however that came over the mind of India since the formation of the Azad Hind Hukumat can be counted as a positive gain Its radio broadcasts dispelled gloom, its rumoured preparations brought hope Not all the king's horses could convince Indians that Subhas Bose was Tojo's stooge, nor all the lofty arguments make them believe that he had committed an ideological sin in declaring war on the Anglo-Saxon Democracies Freedom-desiring India felt that a sporting chance of success had come Subhas Bose fighting beyond India's borders and the Congress inspired resistance forces active within the country, they thought perhaps the end of slavery was near Our self-respect as an Asiatic nation gained in stature at the thought that an Asiatic power was being utilised for assisting our fight

for freedom. Indians generally were not obsessed with a liberalism that meant anti-whiteism.

THE SMALL MAN'S WILL

We who faced a set of difficult problems in our internal struggle against imperialism in the years '42, '43 and '44 looked at this magnificent effort less emotionally. De Gaulle's and the Polish Government's examples in Europe were before us. We expected the Azad Hind Government to come to our rescue. We felt that the movement in the country deserved more attention from those who sought to co-ordinate military invasion with a mass uprising. Perhaps it would be impolitic to dilate on this aspect today. But if liberation movements beyond India's frontiers are meant to be real and alive and not romantic gestures, they should not be isolated from corresponding movements in the country. In the scales of history the Azad Hind Fauj and Subhas Babu might have been found wanting. What was it that changed overnight, as it were, this threatened verdict and turned a brave but defeated hero and his army into conquering gods? The will of 40 crores, the martyrdom of the 50 thousand during the August rebellion, the small un-indexed Do or Die man's unbending will! The Indian National Congress, that reservoir of militant India notwithstanding its own creed of non-violence could not ignore, the Azad Hind Fauj officers and men. Its concern for the Fauj reflected the nation's concern. And the Nation received back this army exultantly. In its exuberance it forgot itself and demonstrated against their imprisonment and punishment at British hands. In welcoming it and agitating on behalf of it, more died, more were imprisoned and assaulted. What of it?

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Netaji's name and Netaji's men were worth dying for—in vicarious fulfilment they found the consolation and elation denied them in their own efforts

TOTAL FREEDOM FIGHT

In every village I have passed through, every town I have visited the Azad Hind Fauj leaders are known and volunteering under its name attracts larger numbers than under the usual Seva Dal name. A free Indian State in embryo exists everywhere. It needs to be nourished and developed. The man or men who created the Azad Hind Fauj in Burma are back amidst us. Psychologically revolutionised, technically equipped, experienced in the art of fighting and governing, they lived for many months as free Indians. That in itself is an advantage over the tallest Indian in unfree India. The Generals and Commanders of the Azad Hind Fauj should on their own initiative refashion the strategy and technique of the fight against India's foreign rulers and their collaborationists. The Indian National Congress is pledged to fight for total freedom. Its struggles hitherto have succeeded in so far as agitational action can succeed. In a recapitulation of methods used so far many of them will have to be discarded as they are spent and emptied of all effectiveness. The forms evolved in '42 were crude and therefore limited. But essentially the striking power of the weapons of '42 is unimpaired. *A vitalising symbol so far, the officers and men of the Azad Hind Fauj can become a vital force now.*

SUBASH TO GANDHIJI

The raw material of human nature in our country is neither flabby nor devoid of intelligence. Men of steel,

hard men of acute mental ability await a rebirth. They have learnt to die for freedom at last. They have now to be taught how to act for freedom since the fear of death has ceased to hold them back. Passions that lead a people from fire to fire are easy to rouse. Actions that demanded discipline and routine for their success require a planned approach, a machine builder's precision and steady painstaking work. All this and more India expects of her heroes. Perhaps she will not have idolised them in vain. In July '44 Subhas Chandra Bose addressed Gandhiji in the following words :

"Nobody would be more happy than ourselves, if by any chance our countrymen at home should succeed in liberating through their own efforts or if by any chance the British Government accepts your "Quit India" resolution and gives effect to it. We are, however, proceeding on the assumption that neither of the above is possible and that an armed struggle is inevitable.

India's last war of independence has begun. Troops of the Azad Hind Fauj are now fighting bravely on the soil of India and in spite of all difficulty and hardship, they are pushing forward slowly but steadily. This armed struggle will go on, until the last Britisher is thrown out of India and until our Tri-colour National Flag proudly floats over the Viceroy's House in New Delhi."

If he is alive in this significant period of our history he cannot remain absent from the scene of action for long. If he is dead, then the men and women he organised and trained must redeem his pledge.

9. Bhagat Singh's Anniversary

THE Punjab used to mean its jails—Ambala and Lahore. On the 22nd of March 1946, it meant Bhagat Singh. Kulbir his brother called me to Bunga, the village where Bhagat Singh was born. On the 23rd and 24th of March every year, its peasants gather there to commemorate his death.

On my way to join this gathering, I thought of all that Bhagat Singh had meant to me and my generation. His political philosophy of action shook the adolescent Indian generation of '29 to '31. The last ripples of Bhagat Singh's movement merged into the rising storm of the '42 revolt. When with two bombs and a few revolver shots he disturbed the sedate sanctity of the Assembly Chamber, I was also disturbed, because I was there, I watched him being led away. Young India thrilled at the courage of one who deliberately refused to escape and chose to propagate the gospel of 'Do or Die' as he understood it. Later when I heard him fearlessly proclaiming 'Long Live Revolution—Down Down With Imperialism' in the small courtroom of the Delhi District Jail, his voice struck untouched chords of the inner being, that was dosed with complacency fed on Anglo-India's cheap dope. The originator of *Inquilab Zindabad* looked the blustering Magistrate straight in the eyes, when he ordered handcuffs on the prisoner. Once the hands were in chains, he repeated the slogans.

Bhagat Singh was a revolutionary who believed in preaching the theory of Revolution. In organising the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army and Nav Jawan

are generally speaking, politically unemployed And everyone feels the Congress must grow into a living organisation Peasants and workers should swell its ranks But for some un-analysed reason, vacuums don't get filled up

The '42 struggle found the peasants of the Punjab busy sending recruits into the army The masses did not share the frenzy of their fellowmen elsewhere The groups and sub-groups, there, need not split up into islets of mutually hostile camps, posing individuality is a mere bogey A common purpose, sincerely held, is the best solvent for sectarian pique and prejudice

Ambala, Khanna, Ludhiana, Phagwara (Kapurthala State), Julundur and Bunga were district tours and therefore more significant There is something remarkably sturdy about men and women who wait patiently for long hours after midnight or under a scorching sun. 'Jai Hind' and 'Netaji' are on every one's lips R.I.A.F and R.I.A.S.C men in uniform proclaim their nationalism openly In comparison with other provinces, the Punjab is weak in volunteer organisations Students and women still sport Manchester textiles There is a great zest but not enough fire The province did not experience the churnings of '42 Perhaps that explains much The Akalis again are unhappily divided The anti-national Akali is more powerful than the nationalist. The former speaks and acts in the name of the community If the 'Coalition Ministry' Age, does not fulfil its 'milk and honey' pledges soon, the "Quit India" madness may return and break out ill-timely

Bhagat Singh's Punjab has been a stronghold of the British. But it has also produced scores upon scores of revolutionaries

10. Delhi after Three Years

MARCH-April '43 was so different Gandhiji's three weeks' fast, the Nation's frenzy, the rulers vicious obduracy—what if Bapu had died ? His return to Delhi today brings up old memories. But why be morbid when he comes to preside over the Liquidation of the British Empire ? Atlee is not Churchill, Lawrence is not Cripps, '46 is not '42, Wavell is not Linlithgow, that is part of the *sutra* we must recite, *but New Delhi is New Delhi*.

There lies the snag. West of Suez the Whiteman has White (pure white) standards. East of Suez, the illiterate lazy native-brown-black rabble alters matters—circumstances alter cases. The optimistic go pessimist, the pessimists grow pensive. The realists face realities unconcerned, busy, talking to small men about small things—but they are few.

The graveyard of ancient dynasties, will New Delhi be the burial ground of Anglo-Saxon imperialism ? Not if New Delhi rulers, (direct inheritors of the East India Co) can help it. At best they will tolerate a change in the managing agency. They are busy convincing their well meaning Cabinet bosses that India needs to be saved from herself. Socialist Britain may have undergone a change of heart. The White Sahebs of the Empire have hardened theirs. Gandhiji and the elders have come here full of faith in British good intentions. What if a handful of patriots remain imprisoned, INA officers and other ranks, no more nor less guilty than their three released leaders, stand treason-trials ? Law and Order is *mantra* here, that brooks neither logic nor justice. Law and Order is a concrete perquisite of conquest. The con-

queror's Law and Order cannot be liquidated voluntarily nor devolved with grace Between conqueror and conquered, surrender is the function of the latter

Even those who say freedom has been won seem to be sub-consciously oppressed with this awful slave tenet In negotiation or compromise, the ruled should surrender both person and principle with grace, not the Ruler The strong must not be opposed with the philosophy or weapons it uses Plausible arguments of statesmanship are always at hand to drive the lesson home

"Can we combat the atom bomb ?

"Should the weak in their wisdom of slavery provoke its fury ?

"Are not violent destructions shocking to contemplate ?" etc etc

Death from malnutrition or hunger is a more silent and therefore a more civilized process It calls for refined sympathy afterwards, and a well regulated spurt of dignified planning It is almost parliamentary, constitutional death, and cheap, confused passion need not break any bones about it The jackals are there to crunch the bones

However, I must hurry and then catch a train or a plane or whatever will take me a thousand or more miles away You have no right to disturb the quiet of negotiation-chambers with crude talk of vital men whose souls are being slowly killed while their bodies grow flabby or emaciated with corrupting passivity The death chamber-process too should go on undisturbed Live in hope Thorne and Co may administer oxygen at the last minute and a revived corpse may need such attention as I and my kind can best give

"KANGIRESS" WINS

The Delhi Congress is a healthy Congress. Its average is good. The 'ward meetings' met after three years. The need for a radical change in the Delhi Administration in an interim period was the main theme. The C.C.'s rule must end as Sec. 93 rule had ended elsewhere. The Chief Commissioner must be replaced. An authority equivalent to a Premier in the Provincial autonomy areas is what we demand.

District Boards and obsolete Municipal Administration should be altered. No more official President and nominated members. There must be purges too perhaps, for small people see the face of freedom or slavery in the persons of the least of autocracy's underlings. And Ramjilal Bandhu (17 years of jail to run still) and Ramswarup (9 years) and Swarup Singh (7 years) must be set free. They believed what they heard in 1942.

The Congress worker wants "directives". Will these do?

Set up Mohalla Committees

Refashion the body of volunteers

Then and then only will the C.C. Quit Delhi and the British Quit India

In the Congress elections return delegates who represent honest patriotism and choose Committee-men whose work-capacity is at least 8 hours a day.

The 'influential citizens' of the Congress, the 'good men', the merely 'sincere' men will no more do. They will only be good and sincere, they will have time for Congress only when they have nothing else to do. Such people must take their places in the gallery when the ceremonies are performed.

The last phase of slavery is the first phase of freedom and the healthy confusion that fright may call chaos, will not suit them at all. The Congress day, in the dawn phase of liberty must be a twenty four hour day. It contains no restful programmes of etiquette and exchanges of courtesies.

Rural Delhi was neglected by Urban Delhi. But the *Ghosis* and *Gowalas* have suddenly put in a strident reminder. In villages Jheel Kutunja and Kilokri, the milk-supplying Gujar-Jat tax-payers' grievances are genuine. Freedom here has to fight fodder black-marketeers, bribe-takers of all kinds, for before the village can sell its milk to the city it must conform to the city's standards of sanitation as well as corruption. They have to fight inflation and middle-man greed. I found the sturdy Gowalas and Ghosis, men who have inherited their strong bodies from honest peasant workers who have worked for thousands of years, exasperated, angry, resentful. But they responded to suggestions. They went in a body to the Assembly Hall. They formed a Sangh, seeing the advantage of a simple guild organization. On an assurance through the Congress *Numaunda* that the "authorities" would supply them cheap and good fodder and look into their other demands, chief amongst them being a rise in the controlled price of milk within a week, they decided to resume their trade which has more of labour than of profit in it.

When they protested and also when they made up, the shouting was *Gandhi-ki-Jai* and *Netaji-ki-Jai*. Satisfied that *Kangress* would now be there to appeal to, they left the meeting. There was no Hindu and Muslim here. The demand was everybody's, the trust in

Kangriess was common. The Muslim agent of the Hindu Halwais was the common enemy. That was the end of the milk-men's strike.

From R I N to the milk-men, was it bathos? Democracy is many coloured, crazy unless you see different coloured rays together in a white beam—the common man's need of social justice.

But strike stories are so many and so dull after all. They are but first stirrings of life in the lifeless. Had the textile workers of the D C M not received a sympathetic hearing—Delhi would have been in the grip of a big labour strike and strikes are infectious. Labour grows more and more conscious of the righteousness of its cause. The sheer iniquity in a system that stops him from staking an equal claim on the employer's profits, offends and infuriates the active manhood in the worker. Harnessing his anger and directing his energies so that he may not be just a misanthrope or a fate obsessed sufferer, that is our job—the Congress job. There is much that could be told in detail, but time has to stop sometimes. (We who run, also read Aldous Huxley!)

New Delhi is all astir. Clash of interests exposes contradictions of greed. The "situation" is "Intriguing" and "Fluid" say some who cannot see it as amusing. The Camp Followers of the Powers that are, feel perturbed. Will the deal go through? When is the Zero Hour for manifestation of transferred loyalty? Too late, will be awful, for others may have muscled in on the juiciest jobs. Too early may be dangerous. Correct timing is what is wanted—the gracious talent of the race-course which helps you to back the winner at the best odds. Give us tips, give us tips!

New Delhi is very busy, in between living in the gentle-lawned houses and seeing the correct people. But there are others equally busy—men and women searching for Utopia. They are beginning to give up day-dreaming. Inadequate and zealous, they seek in the present moment the answers to centuries of dead inactive years. They must serve, they must live. And for living, you want a faith. On the policeman's strike, on the medical girl students' protest, they will build a faith—an argument—feeder roots for freedom's definition in terms of righteous resistance.

11. Railway Receptions

ANALYSING the class composition of railway station gatherings is not easy. But they are all keenly freedom-minded (not synonymous with political consciousness). A rumour or a newspaper report brings them to railway stations. And they do not always get uncontrollably excited; they are different from station to station. Individually they express in sober speech their desire to know what they should do to bring freedom home. Not curiosity alone but the need for information makes them come—it is up to the travellers to give out definite directives to secure links for a chained reorganization of the forces of freedom. It is for him or her to decide whether the bonds will be bonds of fraternity or those of hero and worshipper.

This train platform audience has its own laws. It has its fifth column too in the railway staff who always

head them to the right window, over the parapet, now and then, in the matter of waving the green flag, and become indulgent towards foot boarding enthusiasts. Also, spontaneously emerge a travelling office, complete with newspaper reporter, private secretary—in other words, some manager-minded individual undertakes, all unasked, the mechanical duties necessary for conducting a political tour with success.

The railway worker is at present keenly aware of the impending dismissals and cuts. He is anxious to know if he should strike and when. If he does, how long will he have to hold out? What will the Congress do about it?

The about-to-be-discharged army men and armed policemen plead for a newer understanding. "We were not mercenaries, tell us where you want us to report for national service, we will fight now not against but for freedom"—and they are not afraid of saying this to opponents of H. M. G. even when uniformed in its livery.

The town patriot cries for a programme of work. He feels the need for a change in the structural frame of the Congress, a new plan and a new inspiration to work the plan. He can sense much, but cannot see clearly where exactly to fit in his altered self. Polling booth work has no attraction except to popularise the struggle idea—the constructive programme has as yet not been constructed, he hears everyone talk the same language, give bold and heartening talks but when the sound of talk subsides, he is faced with a vacuum. And the poor man wants simple plans, terse directives to get them fulfilled, a *TIME TABLE* and resources for working efficiently, a living wage, and an initiating, task-taking hand at the helm.

WORK AND LEARNING

These sum up the cursorily felt experiences of journeys since my return. If I had more leisure to ruminate I could perhaps give details that co-workers should learn. But work and work only is the best teacher, learning only a hand maiden. So while we work let us learn. And I have learnt a valuable lesson in these first few days of open movement. The people want to be free through resistance and struggle, through effort and defiance. Their slogans are not as meaningless as we are apt to think. In them you find a reflection of their choice. They raise *Jai-Nares* to the men of action in their political pantheon. They begin and end with *Gandhi-ki-Jai*. In between come Subhas Babu and Jawaharlal, Shah Nawaz and Sehgal. But the dead men of '42 are their favourites. Why? Because they and those dead men are kith and kin, flesh and blood.

If propaganda should mean knowledge-spreading and if it is good that information regarding our policies and programmes should get known to the plain man through speeches rather than literature, then advertised train journeys of known workers have a purpose other than merely arriving and departing. The excitement and noise of the crowds, their *darshan-mania*, their feet touching gestures have increased of late. Leaders have a right to register irritation and administer rebukes against this. True, discipline and its value in moulding and transforming social habits should be stressed, but isn't there a time for everything, as the saying goes? When long-lost-to-sight people travel, the common folk who rush up and noisily demand audience,—can it not be that they claim what they have a right to? How ridiculous the mighti-

est would feel if their authority to speak for the people were unrecognised, their championing of them unendorsed ?

12. Pedantry in Politics

WHAT is pedantry ? It has been defined as setting an *extraordinary* value on that which we can do and that which we understand best. There must be other definitions. This definition sums up most accurately the attitude of those in authority in the Congress. The assumption of superior wisdom strikes one forcibly in the exhibition of irritation and anger on the A.I.C.C. platform. In the last Bombay as in the Delhi session sweet reasonableness, so extolled as a virtue by elder statesmen was marked by its absence. Sober politicians when challenged reacted as vehemently as the tyro. They did not meet their critics' arguments with counter-arguments. It was either a lecture to a set of cheeky school folk or a jeer at men of small understanding. Or it was a jibe against the much looked-down-upon speaker who insists on addressing himself to the gallery. Not being accustomed to the ways of democracy in action, listening to these speeches from afar through a microphone fixed in another part of the building I wondered if this was the normal. Can't men in office face their opposition without arrogating superiority ? Why must it be always a matter of the wise *addressing* the un-wise ? If this is inevitable then democracy has as yet many a milestone between it and its goal. In the ethics of democracy if

anything counts, it is respect for the other than your own viewpoint. Disagreements may be expressed forcefully with much heat and passion that depends on the temperament of the individual. But to import contemptuous treatment into controversies around matters on which there is a difference of outlook is hardly in keeping with democracy's biggest asset, the sanctity of human personality. Sensibility once attacked, recoils. Very often its results mar the harmonious development of the mind. Its repercussions often echo through the tortuous corridors of the sub-conscious. Human minds are delicate instruments. Once the balance of emotion and reason is disturbed it takes a lifetime to stabilise the equilibrium. And what is the value of political or any social activity if it denies to the individual the feeling that it is achieving and fulfilling the urge of his being? Active participation in shaping and constructing an instrument to collectivise energies is a condition precedent of all group work. Its aim varies with men and women of varying ideological beliefs. When individuals who gather to further a more or less common objective are reduced to the position of spectators only, whose role alone counts they begin to wonder if there is something wrong in the scheme of democracy.

Calling up members of the A.I.C.C. only so that they may give their approval to plans executed in their name puts them to a severe test. The need for discipline and the need for solidarity limits their capacity to examine the issues without fear of bringing about disruption. Whatever its technical implications, it would have been better to take for granted the A.I.C.C.'s acquiescence rather than hustle through its brief session resolutions that could not be discussed in a framework of freedom.

The constitution of the Congress permitted, according to its erstwhile General Secretary, nomination of Government members on its Executive. If so, why this play-acting and show of consulting Congress opinion on this subject? Not content with forestalling decisions of a vital nature, the elder statesmen sought popular votes on issues merely to satisfy the formalities of democracy. This resulted in waste of time, money and energy. This resulted in the minds of most members, a growing sense of frustration, a sense of futility. The vast advantage of belonging to a great community of men and women pledged to work for a new order lies in mutual exchange of thought and experiences. By ruling out all chances of such discussions when they met during the AICC that organisational unity which holds Congressmen together is about to melt. Let those who have ears to hear take heed. This is not destructive criticism. It is a plea that every time the AICC meets its members be provided an opportunity to do more than provide votes for ratifying decisions taken by the executive. Matters pertaining to Congress organisation, its programmes and the larger policies arising out of these should be discussed and decisions taken. A moribund Congress is what the pure power politician aims at. On the other hand, creating a Congress that will enclose within its organisational structure energies leading up from every hamlet and town alone makes working for it worth the while of others to whom power for its own sake has no meaning. This may not be elevated wisdom, but this is the view of one who had accidentally strayed into the higher reaches of the Congress organisation.

A static view of life is repellent to me and my kind. If we are unable to make the Congress move out of its

ruts, we must not remain rooted in them. Beyond its set rim the peasant and the worker are calling out for organisations that will reflect their *Life, Needs* and the instruments for fulfilling both. Those of us who have been deaf to their cries and blind to their plight can turn to them now and convert the urbanised bourgeois dominated Congress for fulfilling their purposes.

The Delhi Congress world was turned into a beehive. Filling every nook and corner of the AICC were the rank and filers busy as bees so that for two days Congressmen invited to the meetings may live comfortably and yet in simplicity consistent with their calling. They were housed in College dormitories and class rooms. The camp kitchens were supervised by *Seva Dal sevikas*. Volunteers maintained law and order within the camp area. More emphasis must be laid on building up inter-province links in all the fields of work. Men rich with experience and special knowledge should hold classes for the benefit of those who cannot travel to the far ends of the earth in search of knowledge. Old friends of the "underground days of '42" met with warmth and moist eyes betrayed their feelings more than words. The camp life should have been enriched by inter-camp gatherings.

There is everywhere an evidence of parochialisms, caste and sub-caste 'isms'. We can destroy this by eradicating these tendencies during occasions of this nature. Let us in future seek to perfect ourselves so that our gospel may ring true.

In the Congress Socialist Party Executive meetings much light was thrown on its efforts at building the new Congress of its leaderless dreams. Province-wise reports were read and assimilated. Strong here and weak there, nevertheless its cadres are springing into activity almost

in every field of work that is considered essential. Stemming as it does from the Congress trunk its branches cannot be different in genus from the parent body. There is much good material within the C. S. P. pulsating with new energy, eager to pledge itself to the realisation of a socialist India. It suffers somewhat from handicaps inherent in the parent body. But the new determination in its leaders to overlook controversy and concentrate on work among the masses and reorganize has produced good results.

As the train came into New Delhi I thought of the change that had come over it since I left it a month back. Was it no longer Imperial? Was it really the seat of a national Government, provisional but undoubtedly national? On the surface Delhi is no more or no less Imperial than it was before the 2nd September. Under it, if there are any, no one knows as yet. For the sensitive the sight of the Union Jack flying on the Red Fort just as before, and all the emblems of the old order as irremovably as before, conveys nothing but realisation that gradualism and its ways cannot excite national imaginations even if it can alter its destiny. Inwardly time alone will tell who won in this round of post-war politics—the British or the starving millions. To the uninitiated it seems that the latter's freedom is as yet a far off event. British power in India has gone underground. It will in devious ways seek to stave off utter destruction. To fight a subterranean enemy requires much more skill and preparation than one whose actions are blatantly obvious. Lest we forget ourselves in make-believe assurances it is good that instead of New Delhi its surroundings should loom large before our mental eye.

13. The New Reality

ANGUISHED contemplation of times when terror and heroism clutched at the heart, is a neurotic mental pre-occupation. True, the common run of men do not waste their time thus. And the bulk of fighters whether in wars or rebellions are sprung from the common fold. But on the fringe of this militant circle, sit brooding men and women,—an uncommonly common set of individuals. They cannot avoid paying the price of their un-similarity. The pale cast of thought falls as a shadow between them and the rest. It extracts from them the bitterness of disillusion and imposes an awareness of defeat on what appears superficially a triumph. Even when the bulk is ready to be bullied into belief these suspicion-ridden folk intervene and inject into them their own doubts. By some they are looked upon as cantankerous pests. The wise treat them as specimens of frustration. The kind among the wise are humane in their treatment of them. The irate ones among the great get irritated. And the political parvenu's reaction to these non-believers in "all is well with the world" is one of contemptuous superciliousness.

In the dark trenches of the human mind there must be many unexplored sub-trenches. Will psychology some day reveal the entire gamut of motives that initiates socially significant acts of men and women? The political parvenu's impatience with those who "cannot see because they will not" is the most piteous by-product of a phase in which the profound is completely camouflaged by the superficial. Squeezing truth out of an intricate socio-political complex is a laborious task. When soft-

spoken short-cut formulas can suffice why dig into a situation and fix upon the gloom beneath the glitter? These optimists' zest in life is so overwhelming that argument or action that destroys their smugness annoys them enormously. There is a limit to irreconcilability and 'bravado' they declaim. Grappling with self-life and its many problems as high realists, they arrogate to themselves the privileges of sitting in judgment on people who according to them live and thrive on pure romantic enthusiasm. In this artificial and thickly peopled scheme of human existence it is ever so hard to keep a firm grip on one's integrity.

Passing through a long procession of crises our national struggle has arrived at a turning point. It has either to turn into the by-lanes of economic and social struggles and fight the entrenched enemies of the people or dissolve itself into nothingness. Among the enemies of the people, the strongest will be those who (according to plan) may plot constantly on behalf of the British. Abdication of privileges acquired through force usually follows when counter forces to wrest them have operated with success. British reactionaries and diplomatists have decided to make a show of abdication in accordance with the rules of their game played in the name of democracy. They won their first round when they secured Gandhiji's goodwill. They almost lost it through the stupidity of their proconsul and the intrigues of their bureaucrats here. Quick to sense a diplomatic disaster, should nationalist India go into rebellion again or on the eve of the next war, they changed their 'line'. They stumbled into such a clever move that they can scarcely contain their satisfaction at their big success. The success is contained in their cornering of the Congress, of

securing it in their coils. The very announcement of their decision to abdicate has compelled the leaders of the Muslim 'Nation' to wage a violent "communal war". This is a bigger dividend than any they expected. Very soon if this war proceeds in accordance with their hopes they will proclaim to the world, perhaps at the "Peace" Conference itself that they were and are willing to abdicate their privileges, but never can they abdicate their responsibilities. Should British troops and British officials therefore not continue? But such an interpretation again may be described as springing from doubt, suspicion and fear. The British mind, it will be pointed out, has sprung to heights of sound reasoning based on a revolutionary alteration in its political ethics. It has softened its heart at last under the impact of the Socialist ideals of its governing class of the day. The fear of Sovietised Imperialism has forced Britain to make peace with rebel India. All these and similar are the arguments daily doled out to the irreconcilables, the irrationalists.

We who insist on seeing in the present change of tactics only another imperialist bluff must not hereafter waste time building up our own or provoking in others arguments about British motives. We had better study realities as they will emerge from now on. The new reality has at the moment expressed itself in death and disaster of thousands of Indians. Fratricidal strifes are tragic enough. But when an enemy gloats on the scene and chuckles over a family quarrel, it is humiliating. I must confess that for a brief while I was the victim of wishful thinking. In all sincerity I believed for a moment that having found the Britisher playing his traditional game of double crossing, the Muslim League

would fight him and also give up its anti-national goal of partitioning the mother country. Indians who followed the religion of Islam, I thought, had done with reactionarism. I imagined that they would coerce their constitutionalist leadership into fighting India's enemy and for India's freedom. I thought Muslim youth's healthy instincts had at long last been stirred. They would, it occurred to some of us, join such forces as were working for raising the level of the common toilers on farm and in factories. But this was a short-lived illusion. It was pure wish being father to the thought. Small-minded men had mesmerised a type of Indian Muslim for too long. He has been misled and will be a little pawn in the small minded leaders' scheme of self-worship. And he must die and kill his kith and be killed by him so that his leaders may live and grow and flourish to the full stature of their stunted frustrated personalities. Be that as it may, we will again serve no social purpose if mere criticism is to take the place of action. The safest method of analysis both in economics and psychology is to fix the attention on what is done or not done rather than what is said or not said. This formulation should be for all activists the golden rule. Let our indignation at the doings of the ill-intentioned or misguided not get the better of us. Let League leaders deny all responsibility for "the goondas" acting on what they had suggested. Let the blood of the innocents not be on their heads. Fates' blandishments claim new victims daily. If not hunger then the bullet or the knife—the end is the same annihilation. It doesn't matter very much how it comes.

The work that faces us if we are to take our share in remodelling the future of misdirected Indian Muslims

is enormous and urgent. We must first convince him by work not word that in the freedom we seek he will attain the same totality of liberty as any other national of the Free Republic of India. Socialising political power, we must assure him, will result in developing his strength as a social economic unit. The workers, the peasants, and middle classes will enjoy all the privileges denied them hitherto. Our landed gentry and industrial magnates whatever their religion or caste will on the other hand have to divest themselves of all the advantages they were able to secure in a system that worked for their exclusive benefit. The Muslim peasant and worker in their day-to-day struggles are unattended. They as distinct from their other fellow-sufferers get the worst of both the worlds. While the non-Muslim has been influenced by political and social movements of the century and has grown dimly conscious of his rights and responsibilities, the Indian, who is a Muslim has been subjected to indoctrination of ideas wholly inconsistent with his social and economic well-being. Taught to look upon the foreign exploiter as his friend and his own countrymen enemies, he is in the grip of fear and hatred. He has been isolated from progressive influences, his fanaticism has been trained to shun modern thought by leadership that thrives because he is ignorant. Rescuing him from exploiters of human credulity, religious faith and crude passion will be a hard task. Again all the means we adopt for drawing him into the circle of revolutionary thought and action must be free of all prejudice and condescension. It is the same with those called Harijans and others who have been forced under strange tribal laws. Our interest in them must focus itself so that as nationals of a nation struggling to be free they

may share in the struggle and enjoy in any case the fruits of freedom. Work and not mere words, organized effort and not mere literature and propaganda, and bold and frank affirmation of our social faith can pull out of a dead centre, vital and vigorous members of Indian society. Lack of a full-blooded attitude of viewing communalism as anti-social and antiquated is largely responsible for the foreigner's success in dividing Indians. While uniting us in slavery the British have taken good care that India in freedom disintegrates into mutually belligerent groups. Conditions today have brought us to a new crisis in our affairs. If we can foil the enemy's plan to drive us out of the heritage of freedom, to deny us our total birthright, we shall not have lived futilely.

Bathed in sacrificial blood India's spirit cannot be in bondage for long. If the sacrifice has not yielded the good we dream of, may be, a different quality of immolation is necessary.

Streets littered with corpses, homes reduced to shambles, flesh torn and dripping, are they not enough to satisfy the God that "must char the wood ere he can limn with it"? Can he be seeking not blood but burning zeal or social justice transformed into service for the weak, and overthrow of the strong? Whether we are walking into freedom or into a trap, wariness is necessary either way. Should freedom not mean freedom of the many, its significance will be negligible. The bigger freedom we can only win through eternal vigilance and work. The running stream knows no rest. The stars in their travel through the heavens know no weariness. Only the spirit of man follows a chequered course. When will it acquire unfettered freedom?

14. Nectar Turns Poison

THE call of political duties pushes one about incessantly demanding one's time and attention. If we were not burdened with humane indignation at the social and political conflicts in the affairs of man, life would be simple. Non-conformity calls forth a price. It confronts us with problems that need serious thought and instantaneous action. The initiative to do good acts springs more readily in this non-conformist type of mind than in those that submit to the inevitable, inevitably. Patriotic ardour is a matter of knowledge and ripeness of learning. It seeks to bring happiness to mankind. When invested with incorruptibility this fervour is a source of good. When wedded to natures that deflect its course towards fulfilling personal ambitions it ceases to be of real value to humanity. Practical well-doing is for those who cannot see, hear and do because they dare not lift their souls beyond the confines of an ignorance-bound existence. Such a guileless people cannot, should not be made into playthings for satisfying our whims of personal fulfilment. We may turn to other than human stuff.

Man is a mournful enough object, trying eternally to look beyond the clouded hill. Making him a pawn in one's own game of self-indulgence is unconscionable. Tolstoy in his compassion for poor man has said : "What an unfortunate being is man with his need of positive solutions, cast into the eternally moving, endless ocean of good, evil, of facts, of reflections, and contradictions ! Men have been struggling and labouring for ages to put the good all on one side, and the evil on the other. Ages pass and no matter what the unprejudiced mind may

the play of mind-opening, self-confidence-breeding forces is weak. The vast tracts he is compelled to inhabit overawe him. He huddles together for self-protection, the hard life of the sort stifles his mental growth and thus he crystallises into what he is, a silent uncomplaining human beast of burden, full of cares and want.

The Shakurpur meeting had been called for the twin purposes of giving public expression to the villagers' daily growing grievances and for forming a Central Panchayat Committee. In the 360 odd villages around the city of Delhi live men and women who might easily be living as far back as five hundred or a thousand years ago. They had no means before the Congress activated them in 1930, of knowing what went on in the city of Delhi. Stories of the Moghul days of old, and the Great Mutiny are still listened to with much interest. Vaguely they know that the Congress and the Raj are at war, that the latter is strong and alien, the former weak, but born out of their indigenous needs, a fighting organ for the oppressed.

Village men who had come under Congress influence of an intense nature were politically conscious and well versed in the crude routine of managing public meetings. The newer recruits were made to speak in support of the resolutions. The chief speaker spoke of the absence of irrigation with much feeling. "Why can't the Jumna and Ganga flow through our fields?" "When will the British Chief Commissioner and autocrat change?" One intelligent young man questioned whether we had received the authority of the several villages for forming such a Panchayat. A fiery orator of village Jheelkulana rose to oppose this lone disbeliever.

in Congress intentions. He called the sun and the moon to witness the fact that but for the Congress they might have been no better than a clod of earth their ploughs turned up every morning and noon. He thundered and spluttered and convinced everyone that in exercising the authority to reshape the life of their community the sponsors had acted in their interest and none others'. This sharp rebuke to the doubters and warm tribute to the Congress roused the somewhat drowsy audience. Forty I N A men (officers and ranks) wound up the proceedings with their national song. The simple Hindustani was more understandable than the Sanskrit Bande Mataram. The small boys and youth of Shakurpur Basti were in holiday mood. Their enthusiasm was surprisingly fresh. Surprising because in body they were less robust than their elders. This anaemic skinny youth of the nation had neither colour in their skin nor light beneath it—but their eyes were aglow. Veiled women in groups perched on mud parapets of surrounding homestead formed a part of the audience. Custom forbade their co-mingling with men. Shyness kept them apart from this body of strangers, from afar. In seeking to establish an authority for attending to the permanent welfare of the village dwelling Indian, we were covering no new ground. Revolutionary events spring around seemingly humdrum organisations. Better production and better distribution, more elementary education and provisions for a rural health service, a war on socially detrimental customs and unjust laws—these are a reformist's not a revolutionary's tasks. And yet the latter finds it almost impossible to ignore such vital matters. The change in man's outer circumstance comes about in proportion to the change in his psychological attitudes.

The circumferences of cause and effect become concentric. The lines merge one with the other. It is altogether a queer game, this chasing of an ideal on the plane of the practical.

And on the actual freedom front, it appears as if all our first principles have got lost in the proverbial haystack. The talks have culminated in a final award. Had the imposition been based on the assumption that Britain was transferring its sovereignty to Indians, the award might have fulfilled Gandhiji's expectations. But, there is no evidence of any 'eleventh hour repentance'; for the British Imperio-Socialists offering freedom is one thing—if it is being given who dare refuse—and giving you seats under the old hegemony is another. It is adding injury to insult if one may transpose words. Robbed of all meaning the FREE DREAM has become a nightmare.

When shall we as a people resecure our lost confidence, our lost vigour, "our lost souls?" "In short measures", whisper those who feel their glass is run. And the turbulent of soul and restless of mind refuse to submit to cold reason's cajolings. Impatience is no virtue I grant. But nor can abjectness be justified; patience can be.

15. Dishevelled Times

MONOTONY can be agreeable to people who live under its spell. The sameness of one day to another lends a rhythmic quality to time.

They would rather glide than whirl through space. And by and large, men and women prefer a smooth passage to rough unexplored tracts. For them, life lived quietly and patiently is life gone through tolerably. The courage required to mend the wear and tear caused in the process of living comes naturally, instinctively. The hardihood and patience necessary to challenge heavy odds comes equally simply. Religious and social precepts, laws governing herd morality, breed lassitude and complacency. The small man addressing the fates exclaims inarticulately "You win, I lose." The price of rebellion is victimisation. He seldom cares to pay it. He would rather remain perpetually in bondage. And so he has submitted to the stronger Big Man from decade to decade until the Big Man decides to befool and beguile him. And the Big Man out to fool him can be either he who exploits for physical and material ends, or he who has a vested interest in reaching some ideological utopian world. Big Men of these two categories thrive on the masses' capacity to react. Whether for shiny gold nuggets or hypothetical campaigns for bettering a sickly world order, the little man and the still more little woman are good 'powder', keeping it 'dry' is a tricky job. The pull of inertia is stronger than the temptations offered—but clever men would not be big if they could not pit their resources against it. History is nothing if not a record of the Great Man's actions from age to age.

and clime to clime. He has ruled the small man's minds inexorably and shaped his life arbitrarily.

Empire builder or a visionary dreaming of a brave new world, it is always the elite, the select who have dominated. The small man has been wretched in the extreme every where. It is not because he has lacked leaders inspired with "great Revolutionary" ideas. On the contrary every big tyranny has had its antidote in the shape of an angry protestant elite challenging its authority. But never once has the small man won a total victory. He has fought and perished in wars at the instance of war mongering rulers. He has striven and got killed in revolutionary struggles. But at the end of the effort he has suffered from a sense of universal defeat. In the end, so far, he has been forced to discover that he was the fool. He realises at the end of periodic upheavals in which he gets caught, that his courage, devotion and energy were whipped up to pander to other men's dreams. Those who urged him on to revolution were, he finds, men with "violent attitudes", whose daring optimism is deflated at the first or second reverse. At the end of war after war they face "either way, a vista of wars, oppression and degradation."

Thoughts travel faster than events, at any rate these days. A nation's freedom lies locked in painful discussions in New Delhi. Oblivious to the brilliant pinpricks of the more revolutionarily inclined, the Elders of the Congress with endless patience argue the pros and cons of the procedure whereby foreign domination may end. Having accepted the sincerity in the foreigners' professions of a change of heart they find it hard to believe that if there was any change it was on their part.

men's initiative They are stilled into inaction Except for routine duties of a constitutional character, they are silent observers of events On the other hand Labour in India, as everywhere else in the world, is restive and chafing for action Strikes are in the air everywhere—Congressman can react through his ministers even if his initiative must abide the evolution of a new policy But the Congress ministers in the Sarkar's shoes are behaving more and more correctly and less and less like ex-rebels The policeman's prompt action to drive out labour crowds from the Assembly precincts or "communal" conflict areas, the free use of lathi and the wholly unnecessary firing on 'unruly mobs' puzzles the small man terribly He himself is neither better fed nor better clothed, he is materially no better off than he was when not Congress but British Raj prevailed When he agitates he gets beaten and killed—What can we make out of it? Civil liberties have been restored—but again, not so much to him as for the professional politician agitator. Revolutions wax and wane but the little man is nowhere free And what of us 'Augusters' the zealous fire eating 'nuclear' men and women of '42? Are we crystallising into a revolutionist aristocracy of the Russian Decembrist class? Have we come to the dead end? Our inflexible will is in danger of being beaten into flexibility Can we shape events and not be at their mercy? The 'next Revolution' must not be a wish that may or may not come true. It has to be built—constructed Informed with the knowledge that fifty thousand died in '42 and many times that number suffered, we at least must be true to them. If in our desire to live and work for the cause of the small man we can infuse the will for corporate

action, small though our number and smaller still our stature, we can succeed where the Big Men have failed—that is, if we have a clear vision and a clear method of work

16. Magic Mountain

It is all a matter of reaction. How do dwellers on flat land view high mountain ranges? When Hindustan was not 'India' to the Hindi, the Himalayas were abodes where gods lived. It was the kingdom of the Lord of Kailash and his pantheon. Mankind of the low lands looked up to these heights in reverent awe. The birth-place of the Ganga and Jamuna, the home of Rishis and Munis, the distant hills were themselves personified eminences in his scriptures. Even today the unsophisticated Hindu treks annually to Badrinath and Amarnath, to Gangotri and Jamnotri. Climbing steep ascents for spiritual exhilaration makes all hardships worth while. It is still a tryst with Parvati as it was to Shiva. Mountaineering otherwise is meaningless. The contours of huge cliffs should correspond with spiritual protuberances within yourself. The climber's cultural handbag should be packed with legends and lyrics woven around our Himalayan summits. Mountains evoke thoughts of worship, holiness, mystery, magic. You should be Kalidas, Keyserling, Koot-hoomi by turns. That is how the unlettered un-modern man and woman reacts. That is the healthiest reaction.

But when Hindustan became India it was not merely a change of nomenclature. The Hindi who became the Indian drew apart as a class by himself. His logic and way of life were modelled on "Anglo-Saxon models". The ancient tradition was discarded. The Anglophile Indian saw nothing good in it. And he walked into the blind alley of the Western way. Therefore when the British decreed that instead of mythical gods they themselves would inhabit the green hills of Hind, he threw off his superstitious brethren's outlook. He installed new gods there, gods not so remote as Shiva. Men like gods better when they dispense food, comfort, security and prosperity. And the white gods who ruled India from the heights did that for some. So in the name of efficiency when the Government trekked up to the hills their camp followers were from the leisured—upper government servant classes. Hills became stations. Pleasure resorts of the pleasure seeker, they specialised in providing institutions like cabaret and dance halls. For the overworked to overcome the strain of a hard life, visits to the hills became the correct thing. Golf and Bridge, Polo and Tennis were pastimes consistent with the new order. The European school came into being to dole out "Cambridge" education to the select. From the seat of the gods of ancient lore to the seat of the white rulers of India. why does the westerner think of the East as unchanging?

The Simla that I travelled to last week was the scene of high power-political conferences. A nation's leaders and its rulers' plenipotentiaries were finalising the transfer of power deed. My unimaginative mind refused to correctly assess the occasion. The leaders visited the Viceregal Lodge with an air of grace and urbanity. This

track a wrong note somewhere. Was this the last act of an extravagant for the first of a Revolution? There was another Collection in the camp. An expression of elegant & calm enveloped our leader. They appeared once convinced that the nation's trial was at an end. The small the eater looked smaller when to meet his wishes of British sincerity, the leaders granted him the right of a struggle. 'When', 'where' and 'how' over as were hurried put when the doubting Thomases felt like withdrawing. Almost apologizing for allowing such unworthy thoughts to cross one's mind one grew regretful. The British mean to go this time, of their own will conditioned of course by national and international forces, but go they must and will—this was the sum and substance of our leaders' minds.

Of the bargainer politician's mind (he who cannot fight is no leader) there were many tales. The most acceptable and understandable being that he was distressed at the thought of the 'third party' quitting. Overbidding is successful only when the price is raised by a party that need not pay. In the Muslim League camp there was subdued panic. What if the pressure of reality drove the Leaguers to translate their threats into actuality.

In the benevolent penitent ruler-tyrants camp there was secret satisfaction. All was proceeding according to plan. The divide and rule investments of a century and a half were bringing in good dividends. World opinion would certify British *bona fides* if this last noble effort to unite the natives did not succeed. Now when after years and years England decided to declare India free, Indians refused to take her seriously. And then where is the authority to man the free state of India.

In Simla, therefore I and my kind were complete misfits. We met and talked in public and private of a struggle. We could ignore without much effort the fact that freedom was being achieved. The orderly arrival of that moment when India could establish the downfall of British rule was incompatible with our conceptions.

Our anxiety to prepare for the worst made us plan out a scheme for those who felt the need to work. The people who came to the public meeting were largely those who can be called politically conscious. The merchant and professional classes the small clerks in the secretariat wanted to know the alternative that would follow in the wake of a 'failure'. Brave words can't make brave worlds. In spite of it one goes on alternating them. Why? In the remote hope that daring and courage once inspired may lead to determination and defiance in action. As the sun set behind the hills in the fading light all those faces that looked down on me from tired heights lost their human form. Hundreds of masks, thousands of eyes closing in on one—was it the magic of the ancient gods at work. But the uncanny moment passes. Collective cries of 'Inquilab Zinda-bad' broke the spell. Masked heads regained their bodies.

It was Rabindranath's birth anniversary that day. What could I say? But in imperfect Bengalee I offered my tribute to the revolutionary in our great sage poet. In moments of darkness and weakness his songs bring light and strength. Jai Hind was in the air everywhere, even in "Kali Bari".

In the twenty-seven Himalayan States of the hills surrounding Simla, twenty-seven petty zemindars tyrannise over their tenants. They have arbitrary powers

The peasant subjects are quite unorganised. Political ferment has begun to seep into the consciousness of a few States. At a meeting of workers from these last we discussed plans for creating a unit in every State. The States' Indian is ardently keen on removing the artificial barrier dividing them from us. Congress guidance and its intervention on their behalf is looked forward to. Their "Rulers" interfere in every detail of their community life. The people have no voice in the administration of their State and no civil liberties. Food and cloth shortage, unjust and heavy taxes are a big strain. These men and women of the hill States must be organised to fight for their democratic rights.

In the Solan State after the public meeting, the Praja Mandal was inaugurated. The men, and specially women of Solan looked keen, eager and very enthusiastic. In agreeing to follow such directives as the formation of an Azad Sena, to enrol Praja Mandal members and train workers for work among their peasantry they showed remarkable alacrity.

What should we do if the talks fail was a common question. At the meeting in Kalka a foot of the hill town and a fairly important Rly. centre, it was repeated again and again. Help the railwaymen in their own struggle, draw into your Congress Committee every young man and woman who wants work. Work within a design. Have a common design. Advice such as this does not leave the public cold any more. An immediate response is noted. The railwaymen there are concerned about the impending strike. If the Congress fails to support them now a political strike later will be difficult. But dare the Congress fail?

These after-thoughts appear pointless. In a few weeks from now the new picture of a new ruling group will have emerged. Whether sovereign or dependent for those who have pledged to work for the dispossessed and disinherited a fresh departure is indicated. The Congress fight cannot be over. It had promised swaraj to the people. Whoever stands between them and their rights will be the new enemy. Or will it be the old behind a new screen?

An old woman all bent and withered sat begging on the road through the hills. A burden bearing band of paharis panted up the steep slopes—perspiration streaming down their faces. A rail mechanic blackened with grease and coal dust stopped under a railway carriage. None of them cried Jai Hind.

17. Half-way House

THAT Indian who believed that out of the Quit India struggle would emerge a new Congress (if not a new India) is in utter bewilderment today. He may or may not have been an authentic Congressman but to him the Congress meant the fighting arm of Indian nationalism. Gandhiji its General, a saint Warrior, his lieutenants men of tested mettle. These commanded all his loyalty.

By and large, every Congressman recognises instinctively the need for rigid discipline. Firm faith in Congress leadership—they know was indispensable if it was to fulfil its pledges to the nation. And I and many others belonged to this category before '42. Confident that the

Congress Programme was based on the twin tests of sound patriotism and practicability, we who became active in 1930 for the first time never found it necessary to question their *bona-fides*. Even the somewhat sophisticated dissatisfaction of Congress Socialists did not infect us. Their Socialism was generally not understood because it was never explained painstakingly. Also the desire not to disintegrate the Anti-Imperialist Congress machine prevented many a Congressman with socialist leanings from becoming an active "party man." The sturdier elements in the Congress in those days wanted work; they found it. They did not want assurance that direct action when suspended did not mean submission. They knew quite definitely that Gandhiji's passion for freedom could not be stilled. It is this class of Congressman who more than any other is today utterly confused. For in the hightide period of the national struggle—August-September '42—this naive uncritical faithfilled Congressman, along with the masses who followed him, felt justified. He was justified in his—if I may put it so—Congressism. The biggest mass rebellion was initiated from the A I C C platform, Gandhiji's constructive workers themselves were drawn into it and fought valiantly. The heavy hand of Imperialist repression fell heaviest on the Congress. The greater its victimization, the bigger its power, the more shining its glory. They would not give up the Congress name, persuade who may, whether they uprooted a rail or cut down telegraph wires they took the Congress flag with them. True, the Congress leadership of the veterans had been found wanting, in that it denied us necessary guidance when we needed it most. But even that shortcoming did not dim the people's faith. A younger set of Congressmen had emerged to do their

best The Congress could do no wrong Long live the Congress That was how most of us felt—long long ago ?

Success and failure, the Indian measures differently from the westerners He only can value the worthwhileness of effort unrelated to either Therefore when by the usual forms of evaluation, the August struggle was dead and over he did not feel defeated Instead of feeling embittered or crushed he felt a little restless, a little sorry for himself, a little annoyed at the heavy odds against which he has to combat

His disillusionment began later It started, when Gandhiji would not own responsibility, when his Gandhian co-workers fell away from the path of resistance in the name of non-violence it was complete when the A I C C sat in judgment on the August happenings without giving the "August-wallahs" a chance to plead their case, and finally it drove them to speak up when the Working Committee disapproved the technique of resistance Again when in private the leaders and even co-workers showed irritation with outlawed Congressmen for not surrendering, the fighter Congressman became resentful and suspicious His resentment is about the past Admitting the heroism of rebellious India, the leaders had thought fit to condemn the means they adopted for assaults on British Power Admiration they say is one thing, understanding another His suspicion is about the future In his dreams he had seen a picture It was the picture of freedom where British power lay crushed in the dust and replaced by a free Indian state, governed by a body of men and women who would destroy the present slavish forms of statecraft In it there was no white man A truly indigenous system of

rule for the benefit of the villager first and the middle class town dweller afterwards took shape before his eyes. He saw another picture also. It was of a New Congress Scornful of all British-made plans, claiming that full sovereignty must be fought for, psychologically intolerant of every foreigner and his greasy camp followers, a Congress proudly power-conscious. Having suffered a reverse, confident of its enormous reserve of revolutionary power with 40 crores behind it who could not be crushed, this new Congress of our dreams should not have looked in the direction of asking for freedom. We who form the Congress ranks wanted our leaders to take their initiative as free men—ignoring British machinations, not caring to resolve the constitutional deadlock, others only too eager to take up such work could have been found to do this. Repairing the Congress machine, giving a plan and a programme to its battered and beaten but very much battle-worthy members was what we thought our leaders would engage in after Ahmednagar. But in expecting this we were unrealistic, over confident and almost over-bearing. So, they say. Even Gandhiji altered his classic opposition to parliamentary and office acceptance programme. He grew anxious for the immortalization of non-violence in the hearts of men. This to him was more vital than freedom at any price, by any means. He blessed the initiators of reverse-gear action and questioned the wisdom of those who dared to differ from him. This caused confusion in those ideologically in line with Gandhiji's philosophy. It caused us apprehension lest the fine spirit of death defiance be crushed by its originator.

The simpleton Congressman (Auguster again) was even more taken aback when those who belonged to

leftist folds, blocs and parties, began to exhibit 'reformist' tendencies, accepted where they should have protested, entered the election fray and did not on their emergence from prisons take up organisation-building tasks. They saw gulfs in some cases, streams in others, between themselves and well known co-workers. The common experiences in prison *versus* a set of experiences outside, had divided the ranks.

The scene today disturbs the metaphysical and ethical discussions on non-violence and personal incompatibilities provide smoke screens for differences. Old loyalties lie disrupted, new ones seek a new mould. And here lies the crux of the problem. Will the Congress become the new mould in which this rich fluid energy can be set or will these new Congressmen be told that the Congress has outlived its utility when the negotiated freedom regime starts working? Whether we can accept half-way house freedom as total freedom is a question that brooks no equivocation. It is either a yes or a no. If the latter, then liquidating the Congress machine would be criminal. But the energy required to keep the Congress from becoming a preserve for those who will vote 'yes' to the above question may be so great, that it might very well be more useful to divert it, to a purely peasants and workers organisation. In every corner of our land the August fighter Congressman is watching the political scene, anxiously, critically. What will the older leaders compromise on? What will the August leaders do to give them what they lack most—a purpose worth living for and fighting for? A machine for concreting their action-plans, resources for converting paper plan into a living social-economic-political organism. An organism with a mind, body and limbs. For heartless mechan-

cal men and women in the robot factories or the upper social strata soulless work is possible. But the new Congressman knows that men and women's hearts stop beating because there is no food in those bodies. He does not want to fight for abstractions. He wants the power to stop the white brown skinned exploiters from killing with starvation. That is about all he knows about the need for Socialism. And all he need know.

18. Then and Now

It was the first week of August and the year Nineteen Forty-two. History, it has been said is past politics. But on the NINTH DAY OF AUGUST politics ceased to be. Its petrification was preceded by months of political animation. But the morning of the Ninth saw the birth of a new revolution conceived on the day that Britain's emissary failed to recognise the national demand, the foetus of this revolution had been growing rapidly—unnaturally rapidly.

Borne as if on a whirlwind, Gandhiji's words spun a magic net. It enwrapped in its folds hearts pent with patriotic anguish, chafing at humiliation longing to retaliate, to recapture loss of honour and liberty. Every political argument against rebellious action was drowned in the flood of this mental turbulence. Postponed again and again, a declaration of war on Indian slavery was impatiently awaited. The emotional sub-conscious of an entire people was charged with hatred for the oppressor and his allies. Men and women fixed their gaze on

Gandhiji, the pole-star of all mass acts Expectancy at white heat for the inevitable conflict between the ruler and ruled could scarcely have been more palpable, more desirable than it was in that first week in the month of August in Nineteen Forty Two

From its first day to the eighth, every hour grew from tensity to tensity Tilak day anniversary programmes contained the first hint of plans and programmes Rumours of British offensives contemplated against leaders of open rebellion heightened the sense of urgency Frenziedly we sought for definiteness and direction The purpose was clear up to a point News of Britain's defeat in the war wherever she fought increased the clamour that the blow be struck 'here and now' Explosive energy demands immediate outlet And democracy came into operation to provide for the streaming out of the pent-up flood waters The AICC was convened Its representatives met to hear what its chosen men had decided As they ascended the rostrum, in oration after oration the leaders explained the demand embodied in the declaration that the British must quit our land That firmly and clearly worded resolution analysing and summing up India's resolve presented for discussion and adoption or rejection, drew unanimous support for itself Gandhiji's unforgettable speech, delivered in a silence that was besides the sound of his voice the only other audible sound, burnt its way into the consciousness of his people Everyone held their breath for the hundred and twenty minutes of his utterance. Every thought glowed with a message and a meaning for those hungering for signals and blue prints and all the paraphernalia of insurrectionary action Impenetrable uncertainty vanished after he had spoken "We are to

fight them after all" was heard on all sides. Foreign journalists and visitors came as much under the luminous spell of Gandhiji's quiet tones as those who were raining at the leash. All fear was driven away. Courage to face the unknown was born of collective strength. But behind our minds there were misgivings. The enemy's proposed strategy was an open secret to many. By midnight on the eighth of August, telephonic warnings reached Gandhiji and others that they were to be swooped upon and taken away to an unknown prison. This was again common talk. But most of our elders were not agreeable to credit these rumours with authenticity. In offering help to the United Nations in their war to defend democracy, the Congress, they argued, had a faultless case. It could not be rejected summarily. But the people's pessimism proved to be true. The fortunes of Britain's imperial war had all unknown to us changed. Imperialist Britain had therefore decided to crush the Quit India rebellion of the Indian people. Blind to all arguments save those that suited its purpose, the British Viceroy ordered the suppression of the Congress organisation and the imprisonment of all those who might implement its decision of the 8th night.

The cool dark of day light at its earliest was lighting. Between wakefulness and sleep there are transition moments. These were disturbed that day by insistent sounds of Indian policemen knocking at many a door. They stole into the houses like thieves. Surprise action is of value only to him who puts his strength against the calculable forces of the opponent. Had Linlithgow known what was written on the far horizon he may not have spurned the friendly approach technique of Gandhiji or the only too well meant willingness of the Work-

ing Committee to come to terms—of course, honourable terms. But the Westerner cannot compute what he cannot calculate.

As the grey hour of dawn was about ending I drove through silent streets to Borj Bunder—cordoned off, policed, deserted. The inspector on duty in the police car had explained, "We have no warrant for you"! I insisted on my right to be a spectator. "You may be insulted," he warned.

This threat notwithstanding, I strolled along the then unfamiliar platform. Uniformed guards in attendance on the special train reminded one of prisoner-of-war specials. Every carriage window framed a face known, respected and loved by millions. Powerless and far away those millions at the moment were unaware. Otherwise this act of kidnapping could not have been carried out without interference. That dignified show of courtesy would have been spoilt—blood and broken limbs would have marred the neatness of the scene. Gandhiji appeared grim and stern. Jawaharlal angry, a lost-in-thought look in his eyes. Whoever boarded that train knew the enemy had struck first according to the rules of his game, treacherously. Pearl Harbour methods are anathema when practised by yellow-skinned Japs. When employed to crush a revolt, they signify forethought and courageousness, rulership! As the train carried away its load of patriot-prisoners, it robbed an as yet asleep people of their friends, philosophers and guides. When they woke up it was to find the state at war with them. Entrenched authority—an usurper authority had decided not to allow freedom of movement, speech or action to natives demanding its withdrawal.

The hours that followed the first act of assault were packed with pain, bewilderment, death and defiance. Scheduled to be hoisted by Maulana Azad, the National Flag was awaiting his arrival. On learning of his arrest, the workers were wondering what steps to take when a white sergeant swaggered into the enclosure formed by boy and girl volunteers. His order to haul it down unfurled fell on deaf ears. We went on with the ritual. As the tri coloured silken flag of the nation floated in the air the policemen opened their mustard gas attack. The assemblage was scattered, but reformed itself into a procession. As it went on to the Congress house, wild and angry men joined it. It was one of the many processions of men and women that defied police lawlessness that day. Turning to look back at the flag, I saw the white sergeant tearing and trampling on the flag that I had unfurled ten minutes ago. I vowed that I would help to tear up British rule. As the day wore on, the fury of the people outmatched the wrath of authority. Armed policemen and military rule was defied by the unarmed. Their story is well known to-day. Repetitions cannot recapture the valour of the anonymous sacrificer. He disclosed powers of initiative and a capacity for suffering that was never expected of him by anyone, much less himself. This excessive demand on his vitality may have overpowered him. Instead he showed that though without weapons, he had strong arms' grit in his will.

Why am I thinking of a day that is now a memory—memorable but irrelevant? Have we not in intention and practice regretted it? Have we not already regretted, that on and from this day much happened that should not have happened? We who were pledged to

force the British to withdraw, are we not being called on to accept "freedom" granted on its terms?

Another A I C C will soon be meeting. The one that rejected the thought of parleying with the British except on terms of equality has been replaced. Will the new representatives submit to a plan that stops short of our Sovereign decision to be free men, to force the foreigner out of his power pockets, instead of falling into his good-will traps?

A finality was implied in our asking the British to go. Can we now withdraw that implication by our actions?

19. Now and Then

THE wiles of Wavell have won. Indian youth, our manhood, has been cheated—temporarily at least. Their elders have deprived them of their rights to wrest freedom from hands obviously alien, oppressive and grasping. By acquiring the sanction to try out the British way of walking into freedom our men of wisdom have proved their power. But in affirming that the need for conflict had gone since the British recognition of India's Quit demand they have assumed a new character. Men of ripe wisdom, and much experience—they enjoy paradoxically the confidence of even those who do not agree with them. Why should our conquest over Britain, proclaimed the leaders with great sarcasm, not be obvious to the uncompromising dissenters? To be afraid to walk into a trap is to be coward like, neurotic, seeing ghosts that do not exist. Deliverance through struggle and

struggle only is not necessarily the only brave way of achieving it. Incensed at the vehemence of those who condemned co-operation with the enemy, our elders grew unreasonably angry. Again supercilious references to 'heroic poses' of revolutionary slogans instead of constructive statesmanship sounded incongruous coming as it did from the lip of the *beau ideal* of the Indian revolutionary world, Jawaharlal Nehru. Gandhiji's own hesitation notwithstanding his definition of his experiment in constitutionalism as 'constructive satyagraha' reduced principles to prejudices. When we want to, we clothe a less worthy motive in rich ideological trappings. When we decide not to follow the straight and narrow path we condemn it as the way on which fools alone walk, on a fools errand to a world without end.

So, on the sixth and seventh of July '46 two hundred and four members of the Congress decided to try out a piebald plan to throw the Congress into an orgy of deliberations and discussions. The formalities which 'free' India would observe, were glamorously outlined. Every argument levelled against Congress actionist policies and programmes by the liberals of yesterday was arrayed in eloquent language against such of us as thought otherwise. A new age was ushered in—the age of constructive revolution.

Our generation is dubbed as one without faith, cynical, a 'lost' generation. Is it to be wondered at? The stark issues that confront mankind to-day are unsolved. Though human blood has flowed freely its potency as a solvent for the contradictions in human circumstance has been proved weak. A faint gleam in the sky here and there is all that is given us. The inner fabric of society in all its essentials continues to be unjust, non-

rational. Effort after effort has failed—the small man toiling in his ant hill civilisation, lives and dies in violent conflict with his fate, suffering hunger and want passionlessly, stolidly. When men and women with a faith in a mission have worked these men into a war on their enemies, they have blindly followed these leaders and messiahs. But their dreams came to nothing more than temporary realisations. Intoxicated with their own courage they fought on a hundred battlefields only to find that the end is all ashes and dust. Suspended in those heroic courageous moments, their aspirations glowed like live coals in the inky night. The grey dawn of reality converts them into dead stones, weights on their minds, ugly to look at, reality had no illusions, dreams were nothing but illusions.

“Born in freedom, men will come into the world with thoughts and feelings so free that we who are born slaves have no idea of them.” That was how sanguine Heine felt long years ago. But we who are still in the night of disillusion, in darkness forbidding and unrelieved, we who are weary in mind and body, we may not hope, for we know that it turns into fear. This is the tragedy of the lost generation. It has either to melt away or reassert its positives—search for them after serious research.

But in the human spirit hope never dies, phoenix-like it springs again and again vibrant with the glow of sunrise to spur it on its way through new heavens. The thought of ‘those who come after us’ and that we must not betray them, haunts us. We must not seek solace in self pity. Through sacrifice and effort let us work for victory over an evil order. Amidst all our fears and anxieties let the future beckon us to overthrow the devi-

lish designs of the powerful We need conviction Let us refurnish the spirit, reinvest it with firmness, restore faith in ourselves even if our gods have failed us New gods we shall build, who can eschew the need for them? But more warily, more cautiously

"Our task only begins on the day when our enemies lay down their arms," says a maxim If we can steal in upon them while they, off their guard, are unconscious of our nearness, may be, those 'dark iconoclasts' of our dream-social order will be worsted An effort as hard as war will be needed to overthrow these dark powers. Gandhiji believes the gloom around him is temporary. The other leaders believe that they will lead us into freedom on the strength of our past effort We who are skeptical of both, we cannot rest on such hopes and beliefs Our own tasks, our own objectives should assume vital significance from today onwards They are different in texture, and they need a different treatment. Power to seek out of the depths of our spent weary humanity, new capacities for forging a new world is our first task The establishment of a Socialist society wherein man will live on equal terms with his fellow man, our only objective The enemy of our enemy shall be our friend—that is all we need to know to urge us out of our despair The more resounding our defeat, the greater should be our *will to grow strong*

The city of Bombay has witnessed many a national convention But the Cowasjee Jehangir Hall where the AICC met must have reminded its citizens of stories about a bygone fashionable Congress age Debarred from attending a 'historic' session, crowds lined up at the entrances to the hall Peering into the fast moving cars they cry out 'Jai ' 'Jai ' Victory to the leaders?

tastic, arrogant and quite abnormal to the average work-a-day human being.

The contradictions of life vary in accordance with the age of its civilisation, its culture pattern. Ideas in conflict produce a bewildering variety of contradictions. And these breed maladies, ailments, social and individual, that require patient cures. But more important than medicines is the precriber, the healer, socially significant even if inexplicable to those indifferent to the fate of social man. Men and women who act as society's conscience have faced a world in conflict ever since man developed his gregarious instincts. Such individuals have always asked questions. An incurable habit, an uncomfortable attitude to life, it is essential if the goal is to be clear. "To what end?" is asked ceaselessly and persistently. "A society designed on a moral basis" is very often the answer. "If further explanation were demanded, the vague reply might be, "the establishment of conditions that ensure maximum social liberty." If vagueness has its faults, it has at least the advantage of non-rigidity, and into this frame-work definition of the moral order all effort that might lead to the ending of man's miseries can be fitted. Gandhiji has rebuked us (the Opposition) for betraying fear at the 'dangers' of the official Congress plan. He misunderstood our fears. What frightens us is what he himself has noticed with apprehension, those "dangers from within," laziness of body and mind, smug satisfaction, lust for reward for services rendered. Again he has warned us that we shall defeat our purpose if we don't "promise action and results more attractive than what is opposed." Alas, if attractiveness is to be the only quality of what alternatives we propose, then they will be doomed. To fight

when removal of the congealed misery of innumerable underfed human beings living in squalor and degrading want is the end, to avoid a total struggle between such antagonistic forces as capital and labour would be unmoral, as immoral as deliberately upsetting a moral order for the satisfaction of sadistic ambitions. In the grey light of dawn long queues of men and women sit talking beside the common water tap. A thin stream trickles into the bucket, the women watch the slowly rising level impatiently. Flies whirl up from garbage heaps, rickety children crowd round parents whom they seldom find at home for such long hours. In their sunken eyes, there is a sullen look. In their grim tones is righteous wrath. Their affirmation of rights and grievances are serious and sincere. The men on whom depends the industrial wealth of cities are at last cognizant of their power. Latent powers of organisation and discipline come to the surface in times of strike action. The labourers in Delhi have shown remarkable solidarity. Caste and communal prejudices have melted away. Fully confident that theirs is a just cause entrusted to leadership that will not 'sell out' on them.

One for whom the experiment in Soviet Russia is the best in the way of ideological planning has written

"We are realists, we are in the presence of a miracle—the birth of the new man, the recasting of the conscience, the objectives of enormous human masses. All that is in movement, journeying in the making. Society compels us, participants in an unheard of epoch, to lend a plastic form to its ideas and to its men. Realism is our arm."

- Can it be that in this epoch of the small man's rebellion against the tall man's overlordship, there will be a

to cover the brute fact that man does and can kill man. Political struggles and economic warfares have however a different origin. Conflicts born out of them have a different orbit of purpose. There are in every established social order those who fear change. Such men and women resist the iconoclast's attempts to revolutionize existing social and economic relationships. Such 'pressure groups' or revolutionaries want an immediate change. In visionary conceptions of social existence they say the fabric of society must be built on foundations of personal liberty. They despise an order of affairs in which hunger, and sickness, nakedness and shelterlessness are accepted by those who do the ordering. Controversy on the exact degree of opportunity-sharing may be sharp but basically these groups are convinced of the immorality of the profit motif in capitalist economy. And it is such men and women who as organised units have inaugurated the present epoch of social unrest in India. Today it is no more than the opening weeks of this epoch. For the fulfilment of its purpose we need sharper weapons of liberty. And in fighting for liberty we have to take good care that the idea of liberty does not get confused for want of thought. Arduous mental preparations are necessary for him who fights the battle for food and freedom. The soldier becomes a bad fighter if he is allowed to think. His physical faculties need to be trained more than the mental. But the civilian fighting for ending his economic slavery needs to have an intelligent grasp of the implications of his struggle. They have further to learn to relate their problems to the power problems of politics. They must be taught by those who serve them that in the power of the governed to change their governors, to have known laws as against arbitrary

laws and the machinery to acquire the first and execute the second lies the secret of their strength

The sequence of events swings full circle, from political rebellion to throw out a foreign power to the workers' struggle to wrest concessions from the employer is a very normal routine. When the tub orator proclaimed that the fight for freedom was essentially a fight for food he was almost ridiculed. But now when he asserts that the fight for food will grow into the next fight for freedom, even the congenial scoffers begin to believe. Why? Because the safety-first anti-change individual's personal liberty has been threatened at last. His food and cloth do not reach him with the regularity of sunrise and sunset. The postman's knock is no longer the time signal it used to be. He cannot communicate and grow rich quickly. He is not sure when the municipal services may go out of action and diseases in epidemic form invade his sterilised home. And what rouses his ire and makes his gorge rise is that the underfed, the bed-ragged and the imperfect men should have had the audacity to *strike at him* by going on strike.

A new awareness in the workers of India has manifested itself. It cannot be suppressed. It will grow. It must awaken in him not only the capacity to strive and suffer but the ability to detect the self-seeker or genuine political perverts. He is today quite at the mercy of either of these types. The one seeks a career and utilises him for building it up first. Whatever gains the worker acquires, is incidental. The other, the political pervert, serves a foreign power. Nationalism may be a narrow sentiment. But to betray national interests for the 'furthering' of the internationalism of the powerful is a knavish motive. In our country the real forces that will

ultimately destroy the present order have for the first time emerged boldly. The evil designs of the evil, the limited vision of the unimaginative, and the mean ambition of the vulture-like, are threatening to fasten themselves on this emergent energy. Selfless custodians of those hitherto exploited must now reassess their purpose and redraw their blueprint for organising this energy that has welled up so spontaneously.

Strike organisers who conduct themselves with calmness and firmness are rare. The agitator in us is very easily provoked. Wild language and big promises are held out. All this they say is necessary if the strikers' spirit is to be maintained at a given level. I did not find it necessary to do this. On the other hand I think that during a strike period the worker is most influencable and liable to benefit by educative propaganda. He, unlike the paid soldier, suffers from a constant sense of personal grievance. Therein I think lies a little danger—unless very intelligent, he is apt to be carried away into accepting concessions giving immediate gain at the cost of winning a principle bringing him permanent strength. It took me a long time before I could convince the strikers of the Delhi Cloth Mills that by winning the recognition for their Union and the right of arbitration for their unsettled demands they had won very weighty rights. Their simple minds did not see easily the danger of accepting paternal charities from the employers. When they understood the difference they immediately sprang to intelligent action. "Let us prepare our case and share your tasks in doing so"! The thought that the strike had ended and with it their struggle was displeasing. They had won a new weapon of liberty—the organ of their struggle, their Union could not be ignored any

more An impartial tribunal would hear their case and pronounce its judgment. "The sullen dust of their existence" has been blown off If we do not help them to polish it to mirror-brilliance it may be covered up again—not with dust, but with dirt

22. Sermonizing and Soliloquizing

UNRECONCILED India has turned another page of history Ritual and celebration are over, activity organised to reinstate the spirit of the August *yagna* has brought to many, new inspiration To many others it has brought prison as in Delhi, Madura and Chutala As the year of '42 merges into the past, its record of mass action will with time's passage become less alive Young men and women who feel compelled to defy laws inhibiting civil liberties on 9th August anniversaries will be fewer and fewer Is it to be wondered at, this unavoidable slackening off? The central problem of our times, the freedom problem, has been delegated to realms of wordy arguments Interpretation of the WORD and its repercussions are the only realities in places where the learned alone dare enter Those with more brawn than brain and set as if for an inevitable storm are already acclaimed maniacs They have nothing but a string of negations They have no positives to guide them! When a subject nation's leaders decide that transfer of power rather than capture of power is the correct objective, the '42 type of action cannot continue to be a laudable model The "activist minority" so used to the "shatter to capture"

methods of '42 will therefore grow for some time, more and more confused. Unable to blend their outlook with that of the elders and yet unable to shake off their deep veneration for the erstwhile heroes, they will search for new men. On these new leaders should they find them, will depend the duration of their days of confusion.

Attempting to sail out into new directions of personal and collective effort, we who cannot reconcile ourselves to the logic of pre-forty two are at the moment like unspent explosives. Instead of engaging ourselves in disputes with those employed in parliamentary warfare, we must set about designing a new lay-out. Our capacity as masters of design and execution will testify our worth. Correct opinions and a noble ideology unless supported by concrete proofs of effectiveness have merely an academic place in human affairs. Therefore, this nucleus of new men and women must first recognise in themselves individuals who have a duty to those whose sharp differences with the elders has left them adrift. Fresh reservoirs of energy have to be tapped, weeding out redundant elements has to begin, before the foundations of a *new brotherhood* can be laid. The new order if it is to be new in spirit rather than in form only, has to draw its strength from all that is still vital in the old. *Truth, simplicity and sincerity* are not to be scoffed at. Age old precepts cannot be thrown away on grounds of antiquity. New liberties need new disciplines. Seeping through every decision and every act, firm rules for personal and public conduct must be drawn up and observed. Thus alone can we qualify for the post of sentries guarding the rights of the weak or soldiers fighting their cause. Co-operative activity and selfless endeavour become easier when the goal is common,

clearly envisaged and ardently desired. If the ends we pursue are noble the means automatically partake of their nobility. If the means are more and more perfected the ends cannot but reflect that perfection. Therefore since in the social order we are bent on creating, there will be an end to human inequality, an end to a class enjoying economic and social prerogatives and the elimination of exploiter-ownership, we must fashion our instruments of change with revolutionary intent. Smugness and cant are our biggest enemies—in the long run as in the short. To wage a war on these fifth columnists of reaction we require to be ever vigilant, ever ruthless and unsparing in self-criticism. When the social consequences of our action (or inaction) are likely to be serious, casualness and dawdling complacency is a crime. Everyone out to bend time and space and circumstance into a shapelier model of human existence must face life seriously and pour into his or her work their best.

Looking down from the artist's balcony, life's cavalcade appears bathed in tears and laughter. Detached from turmoil and stress, to observers from a tower, this blend of pain and merriment makes life rich and colourful. Clouds do not persist for ever and always, they say. Sunshine comes sooner or later and chases away darkness. Will the bleak sorrow in the heart of Hemu Kalani's mother I wonder, ever be driven away? Hemu, the brave resistance-martyr of Sukkur, was hanged by the neck for attempting to remove a fish-plate from a railway track. Were it not a martial law trial he would have been sentenced to three or six months at the most. A youth of eighteen, handsome as a God, the idol of a girl mother's heart, he lived in a humble homestead which has now become a place of pilgrimage.

His old grandmother recounted anecdotes from his childhood. This broken, aged woman had seen much that had caused her pain. Unnatural death the sophisticated can explain away. To the simple of heart death for a cause brings no solace. That such a death is a new flowering they cannot comprehend. Distinct from the new generation it is difficult for the old to understand its values. A memorial will satisfy youth's desire to commemorate the death of a hero. But the hero's mother will weep even after it is raised. Tenderness has laws as unyielding as hatred. Pain has an elevating influence. Will it some day elevate a slave people into freedom?

A low hedge of brownish shrubs and barbed wires encircling stunted huts huddled together, a police *thana* on the outer fringe of the fence—it was a "Hur Settlement" seen from a railway carriage window it fled past in a flash. About 3,000 men, women and children lived there under police surveillance. Not allowed any food rations but permitted to go out in search of food within a limited radius, 12,000 members of this "problem community" of Sind live captive lives in such concentration camps. They refuse to believe that their Pir is dead. Their hatred for government is innate and implacable. It is wrong to imagine that they are anti-Hindu. Whomever they suspect to be in league with any Government (even a Muslim League Government) they regard as their personal enemies. Their "outrages" have terrorised the people. But in their hearts the leaders of Sind at least know that repression cannot succeed in taming an acknowledgedly wild and brave tribe. In prison, in detention, in exile, these men and women are sulking. Muslim League ministers have no hesita-

tion openly to assert that the only solution of this problem lies in exterminating the Hurs! And the Hurs are all followers of Islam

Life to tower-watchers is art when viewed through the artist's binoculars To those glued to earth it is a tragedy when old and bent and ailing, a man walks on the stage shouldering two loads "There are four children in this and two in this" he mumbles as he unloads them He could scarcely be heard, his voice was so weak Through the shreds of cloth hanging on him showed a skin dry and wrinkled He was selling *atta chalmis* On being asked to reveal what he meant by saying that each of those bags contained four children respectively he said, "If I sell all the *chalmis* in the big bundle four of my children can eat, two if the other lot is also sold I must sell them before midday. But then you say, you don't need any" He picks up his bundles and walks away But as he did so he also struck his forehead, an act of desperation at the morning's ill luck. When recalled and asked if he would accept some clothes and refreshment he refused. Only on condition that he repaid in kind would he take cloth and food he said Looking up into the morning sky he frowned. He was not happy at having to submit to a smugly charitable, more fortunately placed fellow-being He talked for a while of the calamities that robbed him of his land, his first born and related how his wife died Then, picking up his bundles, he walked away, weeping Gulping down his tears he choked, he was ashamed of these tears We looked away to spare him the humiliation of knowing that others had seen him in his extreme weakness—why was this old and bent pedlar of *chalmis* cursing the Gods? (but *not* man) The fear that he may

not be able to feed six hungry mouths, fatigue and the prospect of a struggle that can only end on the funeral pyre

Must freedom come with such hesitating, halting steps? Is there no short and swift way of ending the wrongs of an immoral social economy? Individual heart-searching and meditation often leads, then, into the hermit's cell. Collective thinking, where does it take us? Into a steely structure that will some day set into motion wheels that will destroy the usurpers and the money changers?

23. Long Memories

It was a vital pledge "We declare that we are equal citizens of free India. The British Government is an unhappy memory of the past and we are determined to efface it as soon as we can. British laws are dead and nothing in the world can make us obey them. In place of the British State which we are smashing by going to the fullest length under Ahimsa we will create the FREE STATE OF INDIA, independent of domination and caste and dependent only on the sovereign wishes of the people." Not a string of clever platitudes but vital, resolute words born out of continuous action. It was taken by millions before these words were framed. Expressed through the language of mass action the pledge had been taken in combat areas behind street barricades, in village lanes, at vast assemblies hurling defiance. Searching one's memory can be an embarrassing expe-

rience Particularly when the search leads you to either a confession of defeat or a readjustment of your perspectives Our perspective of political freedom had been strictly conditioned till the 9th of August of the year '42 by the British Every reaction we registered was the result of some initiative in the enemies' camp Whenever an assault was contemplated we knew more or less the rules and procedure the British would observe They could equally measure up our immediate objectives and the terms on which they would close the deal eventually They knew too much, we too late and too little Non-violent Civil Disobedience did not mean Quit India Quit India could not be achieved by a limited protest-campaign Their truth burnt itself in the consciousness of every Indian who took the above pledge by acting upon it even before uttering it Disagreement in high places notwithstanding, the 9th August struggle for freedom was initiated by the A I C C The people's energies once released from the clamping restraint of hard and fast rules of correct revolutionary conduct, flowed out unchecked like flood water rushing forth, it submerged "authority, law and order" Rebellious India for the first time after 1857 drew its inspiration from strength born of the will to be free Analogies however are misleading when conditions governing events of significance are different. The leaders of the '57 war of liberation were men trained in the art of warfare, the spearheads of the '42 rebellion were unarmed men unversed in the strategy or technique of counter-assault The 1857 attempts ended in disaster, this latest effort has ended in a paradox. Romanticism is an integral part of pre-adult psychology So, though no serious student of man and his affairs dare ignore the emotional realities, we in our

appraisal of the '42 struggle must not any more glorify the heroic aspects of that struggle. Nevertheless we cannot, when calculating in cold blood, help taking note of facts that have led to this paradox. What is it? Something essential in the people responded to something essential in the spirit of the '42 rebellion. As if in fulfilment of a profound need from within, they rose to smash enemy power. Undeterred by their own handicaps they withstood the ever increasing odds ranged against them amazingly well. At last it was evident the people of the soil had shed diffidence and dependence, they could stand on their own, and fought on their own. But reaction did set in, as it had to, when later counter-revolutionary forces drew nearer and the revolutionary urge receded. A shroud of inaction covered the land, it looked like a final defeat. The weak had lost, the strong had won. But the PEOPLE were not really defeated. The people were not crushed, only gripped by exhaustion. All routed armies need time to recoup. And since the period of recovery is over the people everywhere are restive, impatient, striving, preferring chaos to a return of the old slave status. They cannot reconcile themselves to the assurance of their leaders that freedom has come. In their clamour for freedom through fight there is perhaps more emotion than cold determination. But having tested their own strength they are sure of its potentialities. Having smashed and shattered British rule over some areas they are sure that given an ORGANISATION and a PLAN they can set up their own forms of free government instead of enacting a play with the wily Englishman as the sole prompter. They went to spurn his offers of withdrawal, to prepare and then take what they know they can. A

paper readers, Sind is an opportunist politician's paradise. Or, it is a land where the Hur's tribal passions and codes prevail and therefore no place for the civilised. These are misleading impressions. In Karachi as in every other district town, much nation-uplift work and healthy political activity can be seen. It is but natural that youth generally should seek new magic symbols, and new interpretations of age-old principles. These trials though not peculiar to the Sindhi were noticeably pronounced there. In mass meetings and meetings with individuals one cannot help observing a people's dominant characteristics. The mystery-loving youth, maturer men who are devotees to the idea of devotion, women for whom love of country and love of God are equally valuable as inspirations for leading the good life, they all gathered at the meeting places in large numbers. Of the seven cities, Karachi, Larkana, Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Sukkur, Nawabshah and Hyderabad it can be said quite honestly that the average Congressman understands the problem of freedom as a problem of generating fighting power. He also sees in the unrest among the workers the beginnings of the struggle for social and economic changes. He has therefore decided to harness his strength and confine his efforts to special tasks for which he needs a specialist's training. The unit rather than the mass has become the object of his attention. But since a mass insurrection is a primary condition of the final struggle drawing the mass mind into sharing our political and social ideology is important work as well. Balancing a programme so that it does not omit the essentials and emphasises the inessential is as difficult as balancing a budget. Training raw youths into expert social revolutionaries requires a school all its own. And to provide

should occupy us. Intuitionally if not rationally, we know that the tasks always remain unfinished, when the task sheet lengthens out mysteriously, as every day dawns endlessly, timelessly. And since human good must come out of human effort, good herdsmen alone can be the pivot of such tasks. Lip homage to the sacrifice of our unknown fighters, ritualistic celebrations of "Days", leave me cold. Fortune has hitherto revolved on unseen wheels. Let us tear away the veil that obstructs our vision. Let us construct with the sweat of our labour wheels that we can see and feel—that will spare us the fate of a whimsical fortune. A solemn challenging call, this—the call that we must see into the future, build it ourselves. But the 9th of August was a solemn day—a day on which our Passion for Freedom burnt at its whitest, when instead of barren tears an ardent light streamed from dying eyes, and Honour found brave defenders fighting her battle.

Rabindranath has said "For our perfection we have to be vitally savage and mentally civilized, we should have the gift to be natural with nature and human with human society." For almost six weeks from the Ninth of August in the year '42 the Indian came nearest to this perfection.

Indulging in mere reveries will not do either. A political or organisational survey tour puts the individual entirely at the disposal of others. A neverending series of human contacts—mass and individual—engulfs one's inner self. The personal becomes so completely merged in a symbolic identity that the thought that the individual may irretrievably be lost begins to torment one. If the whole world gains and you lose, is it worth the loss? Vanity of vanities, the very notion that an individual "loses" and that there is in it "profit" for others is vain and shallow.

To stop drifting talk (as if talk is all that matters) let me submit a diarised account of a period of time that has been spent in the fellowship of workers and vast numbers of men and women. Many an innocent questioner asked if this was an election tour! "No. A selection tour to select the elect if you will." To assess the capacity of workers, the nature of work and the psychological temper of the people can best sum up the objects with which we venture outside our immediate orbit.

The journey began in the afternoon on August 18 from Delhi. The mail-van caught fire and delayed the train by three hours. An Anglo-Indian woman objected to a "Congress woman" objecting to her dog as a co-traveller—more delay. In the Nizam's territory at Dornakal, Khammameth and Madira, men and women asked for a message. The new reforms and the recent atrocity campaigns in certain villages have inflamed the State subjects. Bezwada and Tenali and onwards, one platform meeting after another followed. Everywhere the workers were reporting their '42 actions and asking for a scheme of work for the future. Andhradesa is the home of fiery people. The Communists are strongly

organised there and busy sowing seeds of doubt in Congress *bona fides*. Nevertheless the people as elsewhere are not enamoured by their politics. But they have made deep inroads into the labour and kisan field.

A day in Madras town, the Students' Congress and the workers want to be addressed. A reading room in honour of Jayaprakash Narayan has to be opened. 'The "medicos" want a "revolutionary" political talk. An exhibition of I.N.A. achievement must be visited and then the inevitable big meeting.

A travelling secretary's diary will tell its own tale. The Tilak Ghat on the beach almost resembles the Chowpatty sands of Bombay. The Madras Indian is not the phlegmatic he is made out to be. His full-blooded response to '42 proves otherwise.

The rush begins. Villupuram, procession, meeting and then off to Chidambaram, with wayside meetings all the way. There is a little trouble between the Students and the Town Congress Committees. The programme nicely adjusted to an accuracy of minutes goes wrong by half an hour. The students of Annamalai University at Chidambaram insisted in spite of official frowns on a meeting. Vociferous shouts of Long Live Revolution, brave ideas of willingness to do and die again. Railway workers are agitated at strike prospect. French-owned Karaikal, intensely anti-Imperialist. One of the most elaborately arranged meetings. When the hour of reckoning comes will we ever be able to make good the loss the people suffered in fighting the white oppressors?

On the run again to Tanjore. Once an emperor reigned here. But people do not remember that now. At Kumbakonam—the seat of South Indian intellectual orthodoxy, fifteen thousand people were jammed into a little

park Here in '42 shooting took place Nine died including a little boy of ten. Did he know why he died? Will his un-lived life increase the value of those who live after him?

In Tanjore the peasantry is in a state of ferment Anti-Congress agents are busy. Zamindars of Tanjore feel they cannot fight both the Congress and the Communists They are lining up with the former! In the silent manuscript world of the Tanjore library, the past lay docketed and neatly bundled. Tanjore District was one vast sea of turbulent ovation to '42, each garland a piece of exquisite floral artistry Sandalwood, incense and fruit offering The Hindu mind turns to temple ritual as naturally as the sunflower turns to the rising sun

Between Tanjore and Erode was another rush Meetings at Tiruvayur, Tirukkallimpalli, where the controllers of the crowd lost control and the meeting almost became a mob of 20,000 Over the great anicut to Trichinopoly where the students and striking railway workers had to be addressed The workers seemed confused and tense The strike was a Communist challenge and nothing more A public meeting. Twenty-five thousand people sat quietly and listened Someone threw two stones There was the beginning of a panic but it quietened down It was a job getting out the meeting at the end The new men of August met and discussed and worked out a plan for future action at Erode Strong men from nearly all the districts Fully confident that the Congress Socialist leadership will supply their demands Over the Mettur dam that tames the Cauvery and converts it into a veritable life-giving stream Good work Hill and river surround a valley rich in minerals

Workers actively engaged in union work Bhavani river-side gathering of simpler folk keenly '42 conscious.

Through Mettur and Dharmapuri to Salem The straight and narrow path of the programme had to be abandoned for a seven mile detour through Vellai, a little village, where 200 handlooms work and five thousand people of whom 500 are Congress members live. Between the village and Salem is Omalur where a Dane who has turned Indian lives He has joined the Congress and is said to be very well regarded by the villagers.

In Salem, Rajaji's area, activity amongst Congressmen is still of the routine hackneyed character. The Netaji Youth League movement is stronger here than the Congress or R. S. D. movement. In the course of speeches made intelligible through a matchless interpreter I get attacks of absent-mindedness

Off through Tiruppur to Coimbatore Tiruppur is the Khadi capital of Tamilnad Textile Mazdoors presented a guard of honour Fifteen thousand came to the meeting Between Tiruppur and Coimbatore there were meetings at Palladam and Sular In '42 the people of Sular set fire to an aeroplane in a nearby aerodrome Many were sentenced to life imprisonment, but were released when the Congress became Government At Thondamuthur there was a peasants' conference They came with their womenfolk Later, the biggest meeting of the whole tour assembled here. A lakh of people They sat as if they were a military formation, so silently and with such dignity

Tiruppur and Coimbatore were landmarks Mass and organisational strength, intense Women and men workers and peasants, old and young aflame with the 'eternal fire that never dies' Union work almost flaw-

less Coimbatore. A night sky studded with stars—strong breeze from the west. Working men and women in the entire district devoted to Congress.

From Coimbatore through Mettupalayam, Pollachi to Udumalpet. A meeting in the bed of a huge tank that is dry. Rapt crowds listening to word images in Hindi translated into Tamil, a language fit for oratory. The Tamilian's response to eloquence very sensitive. Young men eager and anxious to begin work. When will controversies cease to hold the attention of workers and organised work grip our minds? How will we face the enormous tasks of guiding men whose faith and trust in the '42 resisters is almost blind.

Between Udumalpet and Palni an accident to the second car of the party. Tiruvengadam of Coimbatore and Sundarammal were in it. He suffered from shock. She got a cut ear. The front wheel fell off and the car overturned. The Dharmapuram hospital absorbed them. Palni is a place of pilgrimage. Elephants headed the procession with the National Flag held high in their trunks.

Through Dindigul where 5,000 people had patiently waited for two hours to Madura. In Madura 45,000 people sat and listened. There was tension. The railway strike was on. After the meeting it was difficult to get into the car. From Madura of the Meenakshi Temple through Sivaganga, Devacottah and Karaikudi (where 20,000 people came to the meeting) to Puducottah. This State of the south is ripe for a struggle. Its State Congress is looked upon as a moderate body. Its young men and labour workers are intensely active. The Labour Volunteer Corps is almost in military trim. Madura District is a potential Satara area. Puducottah

very acutely anti-British and anti-personal value Devacottah, scene of much repression. Almost on Ballia scale From Puducottah southwards to the Cape

In the silent hours of the night long past the time of retirement for rest, men and women await one's arrival The look of mute appeal or glowing resolve in the eyes that gaze out of the assembled heads Long forgotten faces from other such gatherings come and join them. Then time and space play tricks that almost challenge one's sanity As the sun rose out of the sea washing the shores of Kanya Kumari, there was a new feeling in the air, a new tone in the voices around and the clouds poured their rainbow content into the waters of three oceans The Maiden Goddess guarding this southernmost outpost, so legend has it, awaits the arrival of her groom The religious of mind might liken her vigil to India's impatient waiting From the Cape to Trivandrum, capital of Travancore The University Union had to be inaugurated Five thousand, of whom 500 were women were present A visit to the Labour Union office with a girl volunteers' guard of honour A huge meeting The Malayali patriotism takes a concrete form Language a big difficulty Hindi-Malayalam interpreter a crying need Through Quilon and Kottayam to Ernakulam, capital of Cochin with about half a dozen crowded meetings in between Ernakulam a town seething with Congress enthusiasm Less strained in atmosphere than Travancore Through Alwaye and Trichur where the S.I.Rly workers again had to be addressed to Palghat More meetings on the way Palghat meeting, one of the most responsive Speeches in English have such an outlandish effect that it is almost nauseating to continue in it A night's halt and again on the march Feroke

25. Group Insanity

A MORBID condition of the mind due to diseased action of the nervous system is called insanity. This calamity overtakes the group as much as the individual mind. In troubled times after periods of war and insurrection, the human order goes through the throes of suffering, physical and mental. The order tolerates the strain, the nerve racking agony, in the belief that these are temporary evils. But when evil borne patiently results not in good but in the emergence of new forms of wrong, sanity gives place to insanity. Frustration, denial, and the realisation that it fought in vain, that at any rate the weak man's sun of sorrow must rise again and again in obedience to a law which he can no more alter than he can the system that controls the coming of night and dawning of day, is fatal to his peace of mind. Men aspiring for power and men seeking wealth use his inner disharmony to serve their purposes. To disturb his calm they fling a stone or a shoe into his world. Immediately the conflagration begins. Their power-plans spring into action, whether it is a riot they need, or a strike they risk, it is the wily man's game. Distracted, long-suffering exploited men, women and children of the soil not knowing whose game they are playing, imagine it is their own. They die in fratricidal brother-killing brother orgies, convinced in their enraged state that their own kith and kin have turned enemy. Thus revolution is turned into counter-revolution because post revolutionary strifes are exploited by foes of revolutionary changes. History has recorded this alternation of mass struggles with inter-group conflicts in nearly every age. Where

power and wealth values have been substituted for the value attached to life, truth and goodness there has been much misery for the bulk of the people. China today is a tragic testimony of this fact. Her peoples' trials go on unendingly. Turn to whatever direction one might, the people are at the mercy of the disruptionist whose motives are always anti-social, anti-progress and anti-freedom. Big nations *versus* the small, the big man against the small, are locked in open fight here, an indirect clash there. The issues they seek to decide as yet scarcely reflect except in a far fetched sense, the issues of good and evil for the daily worker. They fall—and how they fall!—prey to war cries that others raise in their name and for their sakes.

Since August 16th of this year men in the big cities of Calcutta and Bombay and some smaller towns have been gripped by hatred, ferocity arising out of the hate impulse has blinded them completely. Men and women and children, no more concerned with man-made politics than the stars in the heavens are bothered about them, suffered death, inhuman indignities and bestial cruelties. This frenzy-killing reflects such grossness and such coarsening of the stuff of human material, that the mind refuses to recognise in it the "divine spark". The mind refuses again to admit that the beast in man lurks so near the surface, it begins to be engulfed under huge waves of scepticism. "Is this all?" is a question that troubles the baffled minds. "If so, why talk of a golden age to come when peace and goodwill and the reign of justice to all will govern men's lives"—vexed and perplexed the mind threatens to take refuge in withdrawal from the sphere of action. Creating conditions for the advent of such an age seems a hopeless task. And, not

reason, but an ingrained belief lurking behind this sceptical outlook comes to the fore, clings to the thought that perhaps there is something "beyond the dust", some grain of gold that awaits its liberation from the mire and filth around it. Shall we end our pursuit to find the gold, shall we disband the *rescue squads* because we have failed thus far in discovering anything of value? Baffled, unable to stop in spite of all our well meaning resolves, the action of groups egged on by brute passions, the sense of one's inefficacy grows with rapidity. It seems as if only the natural law of declining velocity can check this mass madness.

A correct picture of the genesis of the clash and its development is yet to come. But this much is clear that the organisation that called out men to anti-Congress acts has disowned responsibility. The evidence available suggests that though sporadic, there is a loose conspiracy to kill on a community basis. Hindus here, Muslims there, gruesome stories of mutual reprisal fill the mind and heart with disgust. Rooted in instinct rather than reason, the thought that innocent people are dying because another set of innocent beings are dead elsewhere sickens the heart and numbs the mind.

What can one do to reduce this antagonism between brother and brother. Convinced that divisions based on religions and caste are artificial and cannot be maintained under the impact of modern social, economic and ethical concepts, goodwill, mutual confidence and a new understanding must be established immediately. Or the venom will spread and destroy the inner tissues of our corporate life. Also conditions may arise wherein a fascist form of rule will be looked upon as the inevitable need of the hour. This latter is a contingency that socia-

lists and democrats must take count of. And if they are in earnest about their socialism and democracy they must adjust their subtle ideological differences to face a common danger as a united body.

The average Indian, Hindu or Muslim, knows full well the futility of killing. He knows it takes them nowhere. In private conversations during moments when they can review matters calmly they talk as sane men should. If only we can prove to them that their economic interests act as grouping agents also, that the brotherhood of the under-clothed binds them as closely as a commonly held view of religion and metaphysics they will relearn forgotten truths. To disinfect minds festering with ill will we shall have to divert their thought processes along projects that bear relation to their daily lives. Converting the STATE to reflect their good rather than that of interests that gain dividends out of their poverty is one such project. It can absorb their action impulses and soothe their survival fears. Stern measures against the anti-social man is a function of the state. Since the Indian state is strewn with poison seeds of disruption, suspicion, mutual hostility, its tasks can be completely successful only when there is a planned drive to unearth and destroy them. Foreign rulers of India banked on the maturing into full vigour of the Tree of Discord. They see that it has borne fruit. To stop its being eaten by unsuspecting Adams it has to be cut down at once. Its roots must be scotched and its leafy branches lopped off. Under its dark shade to-day the state is experimenting with a form of "self-government." We who are not directly participating in this interesting venture must stop watching it and it alone. We can avoid indulging in this pastime by remaining strictly outside

blem very often encourages one to take shelter in arguments that prove that the problem does not exist. This in its turn makes for converting the malady into a chronic state. Curing ailments when in an acute state are the safest, however drastic the cure. Much of our mettle as social physicians will be tested in the years to come. The problem of dissolving conflicts that are clannish and tribal in their motivation, though difficult, has a solution. If we had our way what would we do is a question that faces one everywhere. Since we cannot have our way, what can we do is a more realistic one. But we may not evade the first or we dare not avoid the second. I can only once again remind workers everywhere to apply their minds to solving such riddles by building a chain. But before a chain can be made, we need links. And for perfecting a link we need a workshop for making men and women to function as effective links. This can be set up provided the initiating will is strong. Otherwise *Homo Sapiens* will remain as clumsy as he is. He will suffer and die, warring against himself all the time.

26. The Ganges in Mourning

THE noise and fever of existence is never the same from year to year. Patriotism unites a whole people. Its blaze draws within its arc of light the entire mass. Parochial and tribal passion also resembles it and imparts to the group the same intensity and cohesiveness. But in the one case the war is against a common enemy. In the second case the war is a family war. Incalculable and

unanalysable forces work during an internal strife and cruelty rises from screech to screech. Whether the enemy is real or imaginary it hardly matters. In moments of frenzy, the eye is blinded, reason quite blunted and that most hateful of all passions, fear holds supreme command. If one could only banish fear, purge the body obsessed mind of all its concomitants and instil instead fearlessness, national and group hysteria would cease to convulse man. If a formula to exercise the animal fears that haunt individuals as individuals or collectively as masses could be found, these periodic strifes would not injure mankind as wantonly as they do to-day. How to embolden the spirit of man? Give him confidence that is born of strength and he ceases to be a coward. To create in him the assurance that he will be his own enemy if he is *afraid*, requires a revolution in psychology, environment and above all a sublimation of the *life-instinct*. The will to live is healthy, biologically it is the only urge that is important for race continuity. All the other instincts stem from it and spring out of its main stream. To seek to destroy it is to suggest race suicide. But when craven fear grips man and reduces him to something abject *because he is afraid to die*, race-interest demands that a sublimation, an alteration in the quality of the urge to hold life dear, takes place. On the borderland of this love of life there must be many another urge supporting it, almost acting as scaffolding for the safety of this main drive. If fear of death could prevent death its purpose might have had a healthy aspect. Actually it encourages mortality and all the evils to which man is heir ever since he gave up living in the wilds. Wilderness-living is no solution, quite true. But the chaos and immorality implied in a warring, wrang-

ling and mutually destructive society is hardly civilization

Lessons learnt in the school of life are not easily forgotten. They teach one volumes even if they leave one shell-shocked and stupefied at times. One must explore before one can analyse. One must analyse for coming to conclusions. There is wear and tear involved in this journeying for knowledge and experience. The world and the antics of its living creatures and man more than others are undoubtedly exciting experiences. But when men and women complain incessantly of crimes committed against them, of pain and death and evil that harasses the body and soul, the mind grows sick. Self-imposed burdens sit lightly as a rule, but in moments which confront the mind with pictures of suffering and sorrow, the load weighs heavily. The spirit to be strong must be serene. And serenity is the first casualty when you sit watching men talk of fear-gripped man's cruelties, his acts of cowardice, lust and avarice. Resentment at our inability to control and guide human passions, unable to alter the facts of race and social heritage, faced with problems beyond solution unless possessed with limitless power, one's will to serve wilts. And helplessness and a sense of defeat cast their shadow around one. But can we live under a shadow for long?

Calcutta is under a shadow that is long and depressing. For almost eight weeks its people have lived in fear. What they have seen and heard has affected them deeply. It is not all for the worse. Much wisdom has come to many whose outlooks have been changed as a result of the actualities they have witnessed. Indulging in generalisations about superior and inferior culture is impossible for one who has known men of learning and breed-

committed in blind anger And such wars, we must know, have raged in Europe more than elsewhere The Catholics and Protestants of England and Europe generally fought each other savagely Power politics have exploited religions throughout history This phase of religious bigotry in our country is in its last stages Before extinction the flame always burns at its brightest.

It is inconceivable that the common Indian will not see through quite soon, the cunning of which he is the victim Out of this deluge of human suffering a new awareness is registering itself—the awareness that to the Muslim wage earner Pakistan today means no means of earning a living and to the Hindu employer boycotting the Mussalman means paying higher wages to labour and is therefore no sound economics even if it is good retaliation

Furies roused by the politician-demagogues of the Muslim League's hatred-dispensation in Bengal initiated this communal war Had the Government not been a party, the course of action followed by the inflammatory anti-social gangster stuff in Calcutta could have been checked Counter action, began in a spirit of self protection rather than aggression, became violent and brutal and in some instances extremely savage

This and much more will be revealed But a post-mortem analysis will scarcely justify the sacrifice of men and women who have paid with their lives It must pay a dividend It must lead us out of this gruesome phase in our social relationships Congressmen have been accused of inaction on the one hand and of actively sympathising with the counter-killing on the other When faced with a situation such as prevails in a religious war those whose nationalism is synonymous with

religion are placed on the horns of a dilemma. If they are anywhere in the field they are accused of partisanship. If they withdraw into their shells waiting for the storm to subside their integrity is questioned. Their private sanity pitted against public madness is tested severely. Congressmen fail to rise to such occasion not because they lack courage. Their hesitation to appear on the scene is not because their values have been distorted. I am of the opinion that our greatest handicap is the inadequacies of organisation. Faced with a crisis when the State is content to be a nuisance, the Congress machinery fails it. Helplessness and inability to function during such conflicts make Congressmen ineffective, good targets for its well-wishers and enemies. Therefore it is time that we looked at ourselves from "the inner platform of ourselves" and small as we are, we feel personally obliged to make the Congress strong, conscious of its sovereign power because it has the moral support of men and women who alone can confer sovereignty.

Analysing, testing and experimenting is the scientists's method of arriving at conclusions. This must be our method also if our enlarged responsibilities are to be discharged with efficiency and to some purpose. All the grace goes out of our persuasive efforts when we are unable to follow up our advice with material help. Protect the weak, organise for self-defence, mobilise against anti-social attacks on the defenceless, respect, irrespective of caste or creed, the sanctity of the non-aggressive individual. These are platitudes if we cannot provide organisational means or effectuating good advice. A disciplined volunteer organisation trained to observe a code of ethics based on equalitarian principles and drill-

led into physical fitness and physical fearlessness would meet the demands of today. The Congress is expected to fulfil functions that are state functions. Its machine must either be strong enough to break the old State or must assume parallel responsibility. Information, Courier and Ambulance services, must form auxiliaries on the volunteer service if during emergencies it is to act as the people's supreme organisation.

On the way to Calcutta I witnessed an experiment on the above lines. Curfew and other restrictions on citizens' liberties in Allahabad had been imposed to check anti-social elements from destroying the peaceful way of life. In broad daylight the city's streets were deserted because the 20-hour ban on movements was relaxed late in the afternoon and early in the mornings. I was reminded of descriptions of a besieged city. Here and there military vehicles swooped around posting pickets on point duty. It was said to contemplate that such should be the first fruits of the power transference process. Nevertheless there was at least in this very city an experiment in progress on the success of which would depend real freedom. The Students' Congress Officers Training Camp with 55 trainees from districts in the United Provinces was an oasis in this silent deserted tense city beside the Jamuna. Practical military training, its science and arts imparting political information were subjects with which the 15 day course was planned. Alert and brisk, the officers to be were being remoulded.

As the sun went down in the west the young men took by turns their certificates and in their eyes I found a look that was unseeing. They looked beyond you, uncommunicative, almost forbidding. This neutral gaze had behind it firmness and the determination not to surrender.

to weakness "Not to be taken unawares" is one of the motives behind this type of training. If every young man who seeks to serve causes other than his own receives training with this objective heavily underlined, may be our adventures in search of Utopia will end not in bloodshed but a reign where Fear will be outlawed.

27. Death Festival

THE last fortnight has been made up of days of anguish, suspense and helplessness for the people of Noakhali District. In every corner of the country men and women are aghast at the capacity of the unscrupulous to hate innocent folk. Men and women quite ignorant are asking why the merciless should suddenly descend upon them demanding submission of body and soul. Compassionlessness has reached a point that defies understanding. A general state of stupefaction prevails and normal life is suspended in East Bengal. The reckless elements in that part of the province have gained the upper hand. To curb men whose purposes are criminal and methods ruthless, organised force—violent or non-violent—is necessary. The State should be the repository of such sanctioned force meant to protect and defend the average citizen. The problem for the terrorized sections in East Bengal is this: who will protect the helpless when the State is hostile to their aspirations? Who will save them when the State's resources are utilised against their well being? Openly and through agent provocateurs they feel the State is assaulting and terrorizing them.

In the Indian scene the British have flourished largely because they found willing instruments to act for them.

When rebel Muslims had to be crushed Hindus were cajoled into helping them. When Hindu India became the spearhead of mass rebellion Muslims were brought into action. The agent is either a dupe or a calculating miscreant. The machinery that regulates his activities is elaborate and cleverly constructed. It oils its engines with diverse lubricants. Greed, bigotry, brute instincts, nothing is too evil for it particularly when the power it subserves is, apart from being foreign and alien in spirit, numerically inferior and qualitative of a different calibre to those it has overpowered. The British have flourished in India and elsewhere by making a fine art of this special branch of the science of ruling men in foreign lands. They foresaw years ago the value of making a systematic inroad into the unifying forces in India's social fabric. A series of cunning devices were initiated. The deadliest of these was encouraging religious bigotry. Having realised that the Indian mind was sensitive to religion it took advantage of the existence of different faiths in our country. It exploited the readily inflammable stuff that makes the orthodox a bigot and set about lighting fires with it whenever necessary. Contrasted with Akbar's endeavours to overcome the religious bar between ruler and ruled the British rulers' efforts strike one as barbarous and devilish. The one brought together Muslims, Christians, Buddhist divines, so that a universal religion could be founded. Every student of Indian history knows this. What he does not know perhaps is that under Muslim rule forcible conversion was considered a crime. No less an authority than Maulana Abul Kalam Azad believes this. As he points out, had Moghuls or their forerunners embarked on a campaign to convert the masses to Islam at the point of the sword,

in the United Provinces of Rohilkhund and Oudh and the area around Delhi, men of the Muslim faith would have been in an overwhelming majority. Occasions in our pre-British history when religion became the plaything of politics and flared up are rare. Since the advent of the British they are frequent. British rulers took with them the Christian missionary wherever they wanted to plant their domination. They did so in India. Consequently the Christian religion with possibilities of political advantages attached to its followers, became a menace. Efforts were made to prevent the faithful from breaking away either from Islam or Hinduism. This in its turn became material for helping the British policy of encouraging religious divisions. Fanaticism was deliberately though cleverly encouraged. The majority were made to believe that they had a right to rule ruthlessly and the minority told to expect nothing but insecurity and exploitation from a majority.

Camouflaged as a communal war a civil war is being precipitated. Lest it should be too late, even in a matter of months, British Agents in India were called upon to release immediately forces that would stop the liquidation of British power. From Waziristan to the Easternmost shores of the Bay of Bengal there is enough evidence that the masterly policy of giving up power and straining with every means to retain it, is working. Newspaper statistics of dead men and women may or may not be accurate, but the fact that the Hindu minority of Eastern Bengal are being terrorised by an inhuman group of gangsters hired for this specific purpose is established beyond doubt. Two hundred and perhaps more villages have been besieged in the districts of Noakhali and Tippera. In Ranigunj, Lakshmipur, Begumgunj and

Senbag thanas, in the former and the Chandpur and Faridganj thanas, in the latter a terrified minority is living in constant danger. Always an area where communications between district towns and villages are not easy owing to flooded fields and rivulets roads have been broken and the small railway stations burnt by armed leaders of this campaign of terror. Indifferent for two months to warnings of their preparations, the Government of Bengal helped the organisers to perfect their plans.

The immediate object of these organised attacks is to enforce Pakistan in India. Its other incentive is to rain revenge on the Hindus of Noakhali for the death of muslims in Calcutta. Utilising an ignorant and fanatical section of the peasantry to act as his crusaders a notorious leader of dacoits is trying to work out a private programme of political revenge. This led to his not receiving a Muslim League ticket in the last elections. Lest his unlawful manner of earning a living be exposed and incidentally to wreak vengeance on the present Ministry of Bengal this man declared war on the peace-loving docile men and women of East Bengal. In the name of Pakistan he is actually having his own back on the Direct Actionists for Pakistan. Working for the downfall of the present Ministry is among his first objectives—so that he may be revenged. Also he told his 'followers' to take the law into their own hands because after all, it was League Raj. This sounds complicated, but we would do well to trace these wheels within wheels. The Government of Bengal are now becoming aware of these facts. Hence the recent note of firmness in their pronouncement.

All efforts to create eleventh hour resistance groups by the threatened failed because their opponents had cut off

all means of rushing help. Wherever the brave died resisting, the moral effect should have affected the heart of the aggressor. But it was wherever the brave resisted and held out, that they were overawed. The State's apathy on the one hand and the people's unpreparedness on the other has caused death on a big scale and panic on a bigger scale. Relief and rescue work is engaging minds of the elderly. There is on the other hand a strong move to launch a movement against the Government and have it replaced. Men and women of Bengal whose political consciousness is keen are moved to the depths of their being. The cradle of revolution in India will be turned into a graveyard, they say. Drives for forming volunteer and guerilla squads are being made. The lessons that Noakhali teaches are many. Unless the Congress can take to the masses its programme of a social revolution they will be puppets in nefarious hands. Unless plans of the socialist state for which social revolutionaries are working are unfolded the misled Mussalman peasant and worker will go on taking one suicidal step after another. They have to be saved from the ugly politics of a party that has neither a human outlook nor a social programme of mass well being. And finally we must not let momentary hysteria cloud our vision. A compromise with first principles means the betrayal of the future. Our ancestors made many such compromises. We are paying the wages of their sin. And their sin was fear. Hence for a thousand years or so foreigners came and overpowered them. A fatal lack of union was their primary weakness. It is ours also. Not a unity of religious faith so much as a unity of the humanist and the equalitarian must spring into being. "The world is a bridge, pass over it, but build no house thereon." But what if the bridge goes down?

